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ABSTRACT

This monograph explores the ways in which first-year college students can benefit from writing and offers concrete, practical suggestions for implementing writing in freshman seminar courses. Chapter 1, "Why Use Writing in a Freshman Seminar?" builds on the notion that writing is a process of discovery. Chapter 2, "Write it More Than Once: The Benefits of a Process Approach," identifies the stages of the writing process, and offers techniques for responding and grading with a focus on how to provide useful feedback and yet streamline work as an instructor. Chapter 3, "Building Successful Peer Groups in Writing" provides ideas for planning, organizing, and monitoring peer-group review of student writing. Chapter 4, "Writing and Study Skills Development" includes descriptions of activities to be incorporated into study skills instruction. Chapter 5, "The Writing Process and Individual Needs of First-Year Students" focuses on the value of conferences and individualized assistance for students with learning disabilities. Chapter 6, "Diversity in Language and Writing" considers the relationship between variety in English and developing writing skills. The appendix offers practical suggestions for in-class and out-of-class writing assignments in various topic areas. Each chapter offers references. (JB)

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Monograph Series
Number 9

The Freshman Year
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A Guide to Using Writing in Freshman Seminars

Lea Masiello

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A Guide to Using Writing in Freshman Seminars

Lea Masiello

National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience
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1993

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Contents

Page

Foreword i

About the Author i

Introduction 1

Chapter One: Why Use Writing in a Freshman Seminar? 3

A New View of Writing 3
Writing and Identity 4
The Many Purposes of Writing 5
Writing and Identity: Chickering's Vector System 9
William Perry and Writing Instruction 11
Conclusion: Writing in Freshman Seminars 13
References 13

Chapter Two: Write it More than Once: The Benefits of a Process Approach 15

The Ever Changing Writing Process 15
Overview of the Writing Process 15
Using the Process Approach in Student Writing Assignments 23
Sample Student Writing 25
Suggested Readings 26

Chapter Three: Building Successful Peer Groups in Writing 27

Peer Review Has Multiple Benefits 27
Objectives for Peer Review Workshops 28
Structuring and Monitoring Small Groups 29
The Peer Review Process, Step by Step 30
Your Role During Workshops 33
Conclusion 34
References and Suggested Readings 34

Chapter Four: Writing and Study Skills Development 37

Journal Writing: A Place to Begin Observing and Planning 37
Journal Writing: Informal, Yet Structured 37
Journal Assignments 38
The Many Uses of Journal Writing 39
Exploring Study Environments 41
Textbook Reading and the Response Journal 43
Lecture Note-Taking and the Response Journal 44
Using Reader's Logs and Journals to Prepare for Essay Exams 45
Conclusion 45
Reference 45

Contents (continued)

Chapter Five: Writing and the Individual Needs of First-Year Students 47

Guidelines for Writing Conferences 47
Using a Campus Writing Center 48
Students with Learning Disabilities 49
Defining Learning Disabilities 49
Legal Definitions and Student Rights 50
Diagnosis: Identifiable Characteristics 50
Common Characteristics of College Students with Learning Disabilities 50
First-Year Students with Learning Disabilities 51
Directive Assistance for First-Year Students with Learning Disabilities 52
Conclusion 53
References and Suggested Readings 53

Chapter Six: Diversity in Language and Writing 55

What Do We Mean by Diversity in Language? 55
Slang and Dialect 55
The Speaking/Writing Relationship 55
Reinforce Conversation as a Technique for Gathering Ideas 56
Group Activities for Discussing Language Varieties 57
Dialect and Written Errors 59
Proofreading Strategies You Can Teach 59
Proofreading Techniques 60
International Students 60
Tips for Working with International Students 61
Students with Limited English Proficiency 61
Tips for Working with LEP Writers 63
Conclusion 63
References and Suggested Readings 63

Appendix: Additional Ideas for Writing Topics and Assignments 65

Writing Activities 65
Ten Tips for Creating Your Own Topics 69

Foreword

John N. Gardner

It is with great pleasure that I introduce *Write at the Start*, the ninth monograph in a growing series from our National Resource Center. This monograph is devoted to the challenge of integrating more writing into freshman seminars and other discipline-based first-year courses.

I believe that one of the most persistent structural problems of the first college year is the woeful lack of attention paid to writing. This absence of any consistent, serious focus on writing throughout the first-year curriculum is a problem which, in my opinion, must be addressed not only in freshman composition but also in other first-year courses, especially the freshman seminar. Although many would agree that writing is an essential academic skill for first-year students, freshman seminar instructors sometimes find it difficult to integrate meaningful writing assignments into the wide variety of activities that comprise most seminars.

At the University of South Carolina, a significant challenge in designing an effective University 101 instructor training workshop has been "how to teach the *teaching of writing* to those who do not ordinarily *teach writing*." Another challenge has been how to increase the comfort level of non-English department faculty and staff with assigning and evaluating writing. This monograph has been written to address these challenges. It suggests a variety of straightforward, easily adaptable ways to help first-year students at all levels of academic ability enhance their writing skills. It also includes ideas for writing assignments in support of other seminar goals including the development of study skills and time management.

We are indebted to Lea Masiello who, as her biography indicates, has the requisite background, talents, and, of course, interest in first-year students to take on this project. With Lea, we offer this monograph for educators who believe, as I tell my students, that "writing is for life, not just for English 101." We welcome your feedback and wish you the best in your efforts to help first-year men and women enhance their writing skills.

About the Author

Lea Masiello co-directs the Writing Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Cincinnati. Before coming to Indiana University of Pennsylvania, she taught at Northeastern University and Babson College.

Masiello has authored a number of books and articles including *Writing in Action: A Collaborative Rhetoric* published by Macmillan. Her special interest is designing writing courses for non-traditional students such as special admissions and adult students and those with learning and/or physical disabilities. She supervises peer and graduate student tutors in the Writing Center and has designed writing workshops for faculty and tutorial staff at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and other colleges and universities.

Introduction

Write at the Start explores the ways in which first-year college students can benefit from writing and offers concrete, practical suggestions for implementing writing in freshman seminar courses. Although introductory writing classes are universal requirements during the first college year, the emphasis in these courses is primarily on fostering improvement in writing abilities.

In contrast, most freshman seminar courses emphasize social and personal development, explorations in new environments with diverse populations, and responses to intellectual challenges.

This book is intended to help instructors of such courses design effective writing projects that tie into course content and purpose at the same time that they help students improve their writing skills.

Personal Expression in the First Year of College: Opportunities for Growth

Introductory writing classes are almost universal requirements during the first year of college; many such courses emphasize personal expression and exposition in the curriculum. Because of this emphasis on personal experience, Freshman Year Experience Programs can easily tap into the writing process.

Although current writing pedagogy affirms the value of providing assignments about personal experiences in the beginning writing curriculum, such an approach still presents unique challenges. Because topics of a highly personal and reflective nature ask students to take risks in self-revelation, the writing process associated with the tasks must incorporate additional support activities that are designed specifically to develop trust in other readers, in instructors, and to foster confidence-building in the writer. In-class workshops, collaborative tasks, and individual conferences are all strategies that help students gain trust in their composing environment. By partaking in peer conferences, collaboration, revision, and by taking risks without fear, students can experience personal empowerment.

Chapter One, "Why Use Writing in a Freshman Seminar?" builds on the notion that writing is a process of discovery. As students engage in a writing process that involves ongoing discovery, review, and reflection, they can monitor their discoveries and solidify their learning through clear expression in writing.

Chapter Two, "Write it More than Once: The Benefits of a Process Approach," identifies the stages of the writing process: prewriting and brainstorming, drafting, reviewing, revising, proofreading, and editing. Techniques for responding and grading are included in this chapter, with a focus on how to provide useful feedback and yet streamline your work as an instructor.

Chapter Three, "Building Successful Peer Groups in Writing," provides ideas for planning, organizing, and monitoring peer-group review of student writing. This chapter focuses on activities that integrate the speaking, reading, and writing processes during peer-editing or review workshops.

Chapter Four, "Writing and Study Skills Development," includes descriptions of writing activities in goal-setting, creating internal motivation, time-management, text reading, note-taking, exam preparation, taking essay exams, and self-assessment. These activities can be incorporated into study skills instruction.

Chapter Five, "The Writing Process and Individual Needs of First-Year Students," focuses on the value of conferences and especially the importance of individualized assistance for students with learning disabilities. In this chapter, instructors will find ideas for having effective conversations about writing and helping students with learning disabilities, as well as those students with visual or hearing impairments or physical restrictions.

Chapter Six, "Diversity in Language and Writing," considers the relationship between variety in English and developing writing skills. In addition to exploring the effect of regional dialects and slang on developing writing skills, there are ideas for

assisting writers for whom English may be a second language. These students may be either international students or they may be American citizens for whom English never became the dominant language in speech, reading, or writing. Both groups of students need some unique assistance in gaining English writing skills and sensitivity to the ways in which language use reflects and affects ethnic identities.

The Appendix offers practical suggestions for in-class and out-of-class writing assignments in a variety of topic areas.

Just as we have begun paying more attention to the ways in which we create links between learning and writing, we also need to articulate more clearly connections between the writing process and Freshman Year Experience programs. The ideas and suggestions in this book are designed to help administrators, instructors, and paraprofessionals identify ways to make the first year of college a more satisfying and rewarding experience for all those participating in a learning endeavor.

Chapter 1

Why Use Writing in a Freshman Seminar?

Writing is many things, with many purposes, with many audiences, with many values and consequences. Also, each person is a unique writer, and each time we write, we create a new self through the process that itself is ever-changing. If you wish to help students grow through the use of writing, you will need to address their perceptions of the writing process, purposes for writing, and "sense of self" associated with writing tasks in the classroom. In this chapter, we will look at how the way we teach writing can promote the development of the self and the development of writing abilities or skills. Although it may seem like a huge job to accommodate this perspective, the gains are immeasurable. As Robert Brooke (1991) states in his book, *Writing and Sense of Self*, "Classroom practices which promote an understanding of self as writer are likely to 'teach' writing more effectively than practices which focus only on expanding writing processes or on internalizing formal rules" (p. 5). The goal of this monograph is to help you discover ways to use writing in a freshman seminar course that make connections among intellectual, personal, and social arenas.

You may be wondering if you really want to make writing an integral part of your course. Visions of more assignments to create and explain, more badly written essays to read, and more sentences to correct may float before you. Although it is true that making your course "writing intensive" will have consequences for the structure of your course and your own workload, creating assignments and responding to student writing are not tasks that have to be odious and overwhelming. This monograph suggests ways to make these teaching responsibilities more manageable. For example, in your dedication to your profession, you may never have considered the approach of not reading and marking everything your students write. There are a number of ways to streamline responding to student writing with strategies that increase the effectiveness of your response. When we keep in mind that studies have clearly shown that students do not benefit from copious comments on their writing, we know that there has to be another way to give helpful feedback.

A consistent approach to instruction, composing, and responding should help you and your students find rewards in becoming writers. In her book, *Helping Students Write Well*, Barbara Walvoord (1986) explains,

First, writing is the yeast of the learning process, not merely the frosting. To integrate writing as a significant element in your course is to enrich students' learning, and the thoughtful teacher can increase the yield by careful attention to the types of writing students do, the purposes writing fulfills, and the way assignments are explained to students. (p. 240)

Above all, writing is a tool for active learning, and it is a very flexible tool that can enable you to nurture students' growth while helping them learn to become independent, active learners. Once you determine what kind of learning you hope to nurture, you can proceed to integrate writing activities to further that nurturing process.

A New View of Writing

First, let's look at the writing process very broadly and gather some ideas about the benefits of using writing in a non-English course. One way to begin seeing writing anew is to explore the multifold purposes and values of writing and to discover ways to integrate creative, informal, or imaginative writing into academic writing. Another way to begin changing your views of using writing is to understand the writing process as recursive and cyclical, requiring writers to review, rewrite, and re-invent continuously. As an instructor, therefore, your role will change; you can begin to perceive your role as an instructor of writing, not as just the "expert" who attacks a piece of student writing with a red pen, but as a coach and collaborator who is involved in your students' writing processes from the beginning to the end.

The Teacher as Coach

Imagine yourself for a moment as a coach of a basketball team.

"Writing is what makes someone become a better writer--writing in a non-threatening environment, with support and encouragement to help develop confidence and control in using written language clearly and purposefully."

Where are you and where are the players? Are you on the sidelines—watching, encouraging, commenting, advising—while they are busy on the court? Occasionally, there are time-outs when you get together with the players and confer briefly about what has been going on, and then you create a strategy for the next few minutes.

During the conference, you might point out the best plays and those that weren't successful in getting the ball down the court. After speaking together briefly, the players return to the court with new motivation for the game.

Coaching writing can be very similar to this scenario: while your "players"—the students writing—are "on the court"—in the middle of the composing process—you're watching, observing their actions, hesitations, and energy. Occasionally, you interrupt to give feedback, asking simple questions such as, *"How are you doing? Do you have any questions so far?"*

You might read a paragraph or two and give your response and then send the students back into the thick of their composing. They return to their writing encouraged that they are on the right track, and, with your suggestions, they renew their motivation and commitment to their topics. Becoming a writing coach means that you get involved in your students' composing processes. To coach effectively, you'll have to devote some class time to writing or visiting your writing center with your students.

Later in this monograph, we'll look at ways to turn your class into a "writing workshop" so that you can be an active coach while your students are working.

Writing and Identity

When students write in a college setting, they are responding to the social situation of the classroom, and they must simultaneously be working on their identities, creating a picture of themselves that helps them determine how they can become writers in a college community (Brooke, 1991). When we recognize that writing necessarily entails this kind of work on oneself, we can better understand the difficult learning process students are experiencing. Developing one's abilities as a writer is not just a matter of gaining skills. Learning to master sentence structure and to identify subjects and verbs will not make someone a writer. *Writing* is what makes someone become a better writer—writing in a non-threatening environment, with support and encouragement to help develop confidence and control in using written language clearly and purposefully.

Writing and Identity for the First-Year Student

Writing and identity are related and intertwined in complex ways, especially for first-year students. All of us teaching in higher education were once first-year students, and we need to recall that early experience to recapture how writing fit into our identities at that point in our lives. Probably you remember an introductory course in writing or literature, and you remember writing many essays, getting some feedback, and struggling to keep up with the requirements. There was a lot of work, and it probably wasn't always easy, but was it ever exciting or rewarding? Did it seem to have a real place in your life that was meaningful? When did you feel you were in control of what you wrote about and how?

As an instructor in a freshman seminar program, you have the opportunity to help students find a meaningful role for writing on their own and to create meaningful tasks with purposes beyond fulfilling a requirement. After interviewing first-year students, Brooke (1991) feels that most are "not necessarily motivated to learn writing in itself and for itself. . . . Most college students are primarily concerned with what their performance in these college classes implies about them as college students" (p. 5). Instead, he suggests, "For first-year students, what motivates writing, what makes it significant, is its potential for finding or creating a social place, a role for the self, a relationship to social groups the individual considers important" (p. 8). Brooke's perspective is both disturbing and exciting for teachers: we realize that what *we* thought mattered about writing doesn't equate to what the student values; but we can begin to grapple with ways to make writing assignments meaningful to students. Primarily, we need to find strategies to integrate their important concerns into assignment topics and ways to integrate group writing activities into their social arenas.

The Many Purposes of Writing

One of the first and hardest obstacles to overcome as a teacher of writing is your students' conviction that writing has no meaning beyond fulfilling an assignment. Often students interpret their writing tasks as merely reporting on information gathered from lectures and books. This belief severely limits the ways in which writing can be intertwined with personal, social, and intellectual development because it eliminates the opportunity for the expression of feelings and analysis of ideas and observations. Freshman seminar courses that incorporate observational and analytical activities need to take into account the restricted view of writing that students may have and introduce writing activities that help broaden their attitudes and perceptions of writing. The views of writing listed below offer some ways to change students' perceptions of writing, to encourage them as developing writers and learners, and to emphasize the positive aspects of writing while affirming their previously productive experiences with writing.

"One of the first and hardest obstacles to overcome as a teacher of writing is your students' conviction that writing has no meaning beyond fulfilling an assignment."

Writing is Discovering New Ideas

The writing process is a discovery process, one that is inherently tied to change and learning. The writing process includes a focus on reviewing, reflecting, and revising language, so that as students engage in ongoing discovery, review, and reflection, they can monitor their discoveries and solidify their learning through clear expression in writing. Students may present you with numerous reasons why they can't write or think because they don't value their own experiences or ideas or observations. Their "writer's block" may stem from a lack of confidence or previous success, but even more likely from a fear of not having anything "important" to say. The instructor's job as a coach is to encourage writers simply to begin, to trust their expression and experiences—and to realize that beginnings (early drafts) are meant to be hacked apart (by the writer), rewritten, rethought, and yes, even thrown out. Because students have never realized that they do indeed have something unique to say in writing, it is often helpful just to explain, *"You have something new and different to express about being alive. Although you and your reader have a lot*

"Helping students recover their own voices is the most beneficial thing you can do for your students in terms of developing their writing abilities and their identities."

in common as human beings, you are also very different because your experiences and ideas are different. Your job as a writer is to explain those differences and draw upon what you have in common."

Writing is Expressive

Students often separate "school" from "creative" writing when, in fact, all writing is creative. This conviction that all writing is *creative writing* is not as dangerous as it sounds; students will not, upon hearing that we encourage creativity, submit wild personal narratives or poetry instead of required essays. Their hesitance to use their own voices is so embedded in their writing behavior that you will have to encourage students repeatedly to *"write naturally."* And allowing oneself to be creative is the key to using one's own voice.

Telling students, *"Sure, be creative when you write this,"* gives them the freedom to use their own voices as they write, to be honest and direct. When students believe that you really do want them to write honestly and directly out of their own experiences, it often seems that a miracle has occurred in overall clarity and expression in their writing. Many errors disappear because writers are more relaxed and confident as they write. It is easy to teach writers to proofread for remaining errors that may be the result of writing too much like they speak. Helping students recover their own voices is the most beneficial thing you can do for your students in terms of developing their writing abilities and their identities.

Writing Builds Self-Confidence

Because writing is so personal, we always take a risk when we write. We are expressing our ideas in our own language. In a sense, we are what we say, and when we express ourselves in language, we are revealing aspects of our identity and, thus, opening ourselves up to others. Writing in a controlled process can help people develop self-confidence as communicators when they have positive and successful experiences. Briefly, two pedagogical techniques are crucial for creating a confidence-building environment: "do-able" assignments and peer review. Peer reading and review through small-group writing workshops and exchanges between partners help students recognize that their writing "worked," and assignments that are clearly and explicitly made but are not complex help students perceive that they can meet requirements successfully.

Peer Review Builds Confidence and Success. When students exchange writing and read each other's work, a great deal happens, all of which contributes to the development of their communication skills: they learn what others are thinking and experiencing, they develop critical reading skills when given specific purposes for reading, they learn to talk with each other about writing, they learn to enjoy the social aspect of writing, and they learn that their writing "worked"—that they did indeed communicate with another person through their writing. Although in the first few sessions it may appear that students are not learning much about improving their writing through peer review, it's important to realize that the skills necessary for effective peer review build cumulatively, and the act of conversing and exchanging writing has tremendous benefits in itself. Peer-review skills build cumulatively throughout a course. Peer response is not the same as instructor response: it has

different purposes and functions differently. Peers will never be "expert" readers, but they will become effective respondents. Peer review workshops do not have to be complex or time-consuming either; fifteen-minute sessions that are allocated to reading and briefly responding to each other's writing can be just as effective as thirty-minute sessions that may involve more complicated analysis.

Effective Assignments: Guide, Not Prescribe. A positive experience with tackling a writing task, seeing an assignment through to the end successfully and receiving positive feedback on a piece of writing can contribute tremendously to the development of self-confidence. For assignments to be effective, they must tap into familiar abilities and challenge students in new but accessible ways. Instructional designs must incorporate guidelines that take students through the entire task but do not dictate exactly how the task is to be completed. The writing "coach" has to give directions that allow writers room to make their own choices so that the writing remains their own and not the teacher's. Writers will need uncomplicated but clear directions, frequent feedback on early and middle drafts, opportunities to revise, and final comments that identify strengths as well as weaknesses.

Providing useful directions in an assignment and offering substantial responses during the early and middle drafting stages is different from giving students a highly prescribed format for style, expression, and organization. As an instructor, you have to keep helpful directions and feedback from intruding into the student's ownership of the writing. When you start telling a student to *"write it like this"* and offering words and phrases, the writing becomes yours and not the student's. Instead, providing responses based on your own reading experience will help the student to discover his or her own better expression. A comment like, *"I got lost in this paragraph. How do you think you might provide your reader with a stronger focus?"* gives the writer the responsibility and satisfaction of independently revising. Similarly, when providing guidelines for organization, asking students to consider the purpose of each paragraph as they compose, rather than dictating, *"In the first paragraph, write your thesis in the second sentence,"* ensures that the writers are in charge of choosing and creating patterns for their work. When students cannot choose or create, the "requirement" component of the writing task dominates their experience and eliminates the possibility that the writing can be meaningful. In the second chapter, we will look more closely at how to design effective assignments.

Writing is Transactional

Something happens when we write, and in many college-level writing assignments, students perceive the transference of objective information between writer and reader to be the most dominant purpose. It is important for students to learn to identify important information and to learn to assess why one set of facts is more significant than another set, for example. And they need to be able to record accurately their observations and understandings and restate such information accurately and clearly. Most college instructors, however, expect students to do more than just report: because we associate writing with discovering knowledge, gaining insights, and learning in general, we expect to see

"When you start telling a student to 'write it like this' and offering words and phrases, the writing becomes yours and not the student's. Instead, providing responses based on your own reading experience will help the student to discover his or her own better expression."

"First-year students will need specific guidance in learning to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Then, they will need specific activities to help them learn to express analysis in writing."

opinions, analysis, and critical perspectives in student writing. First-year students may be very surprised that you want to see their reactions, responses, and critical opinions in their writing, and even when they do accept this new purpose for writing, they may not have the styles or vocabulary necessary to express themselves analytically. First-year students will need specific guidance in learning to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Then, they will need specific activities to help them learn to express analysis in writing.

Analysis—Beyond Reporting. Transactional writing can constitute an important part of writing projects in a freshman seminar course, but instructors need to identify distinctions for students between writing that reports or records and writing that analyzes or reacts. For example, an instructor might give the assignment, *"Write a report on an interview of someone in the health center about our AIDS program,"* and be disappointed when the students merely report on the interview or even just provide a transcription of the interview, without offering any critical or analytical response to the interview or to the information uncovered through their conversations with a health professional. To receive analysis, an instructor must overtly ask for it by stating, *"Evaluate our program. Explain what seems to you to be good about it and what isn't good. Make recommendations for improving it."* Even asking specifically for evaluation is not enough, however, because students are not experienced in expressing their opinions. Instructors will have to provide model statements that show analysis and explain how specific words and phrases introduce evaluative statements. Sometimes, students can easily be set on the right path by being told, *"It's alright to use 'I' when you write. I want to know your opinion. Start a sentence with 'I think' and finish it."*

Instructors must overtly teach analysis and the expression of opinion, modeling this process and these kinds of statements for students and giving them opportunities to practice analysis and "opinionated" writing in a risk-free situation. When students do have an opportunity to develop critical and analytical skills in writing, they learn that the "transactional" component of writing is more than just reporting facts and observations, but commenting on them.

Writing is Social

The image of a person writing alone, suffering, struggling, tearing up sheet after sheet of early drafts permeates our culture. Popular movies such as *Throw Mama From the Train* show writers in such lonely, frustrated, miserable states, unable to compose. Recently, Karen Burke LeFevre (1987) pointed out that this view of the "inspired" writer who works alone has its origins in Platonic philosophy and is now connected to the prevalent, traditional, and perhaps male approach that considers the writer as isolated. She draws upon Carol Gilligan's work to show how this approach may be very masculine, whereby moral decisions are made based on abstract principles rather than by the female approach of making moral decisions based on the ways people are connected to each other and the consequences of actions on their relationships. LeFevre suggests that it is "masculine" for a writer to feel he or she must "tough it out" alone rather than collaborate or seek help.

Let's Make Writing Unromantic. This overly romantic, idealized, and

perhaps male perspective on the composing process influences the way beginning college students view writing and their abilities to be successful. They expect that they have to write alone and suffer. Instead, writing is really a very social act, one that does not occur in isolation, but rather always with a real or imagined audience responding to writing, and often in collaboration with others during all stages of the composing process.

It is not easy for beginning college students to learn to work together and enjoy this social aspect of writing. LeFevre (1987) reminds us that "People may be so inexperienced at inventing together that they cannot stop competing long enough to realize the benefits of collaboration" (p. 26). Although teaching collaboration may be time-consuming for instructors, it fits in with goals of creating independent, self-reliant learners who also know how to work well with their peers. And it frees the instructor from the burden of trying to provide all response to individual student work single-handedly. In Chapter Three, we will consider more thoroughly the use of peer groups.

Writing and Identity: Chickering's Vector System

We simply cannot talk about writing without talking about self-confidence and self-esteem; learning to write well is not just a matter of learning certain "skills," such as clear sentence construction, accurate punctuation and grammar, or using topic sentences. More likely, learning to write well means overcoming some degree of writer's block, developing ideas, expressing one's feelings, and persisting with a challenging task until it's finished. These kinds of features about the writing process can be nurtured through effective teaching, and it's useful to understand and develop a sensitivity to how they intersect with personal development. The development of writing abilities has clear parallels with Arthur Chickering's (1978) model of student development. Chickering's model helps us see how the composing process fosters growth.

Chickering's Model

Chickering maintains that there are seven primary tasks or "vectors" of student development. These are

1. Achieving Competence
2. Managing Emotions
3. Becoming Autonomous
4. Establishing Identity
5. Freeing Interpersonal Relationships
6. Clarifying Purposes
7. Developing Integrity

These vectors operate simultaneously but carry varying weight and importance at different points in a person's life. Movement through the vectors is by no means linear; but, like the writing process, it is multi-directional and cyclical, with progress and regression dependent upon circumstances, the environment, the individual's characteristics, and his/her developing self-esteem and self-concept.

Growth in the first vector, "Achieving Competence," refers to a person's efforts in identifying, validating, and clarifying his or her sense of intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. People come to writing tasks concerned about their competence as writers. We might consider in light of this vector, these questions:

---How do students personally define their own "competence" in writing?

"Although teaching collaboration may be time-consuming for instructors, it fits in with goals of creating independent, self-reliant learners who also know how to work well with their peers."

"As a pivotal point for all the vectors, establishing identity draws upon all the vectors, and yet there are certain questions specific to establishing identity."

—What previous experiences have shaped their sense of competence?

—How do students' definitions of competence in writing affect their ability to finish a writing task?

Growth in the second vector, "Managing Emotions," refers to the individual's ability to act appropriately and to acknowledge personal emotions as well as the emotions of others. Included in this vector are increased awareness and trust of one's own emotions and an acceptance that emotions vary widely. Self-confidence plays an important role in this process. Talking about one's writing requires self-confidence and self-esteem and the ability to hear and integrate criticism. This vector prompts these questions about student writing:

—How do writers' levels of self-confidence affect their abilities to discuss their writing?

—What kinds of emotional responses are likely to occur during a conference or peer-review session?

Growth in the third vector, "Becoming Autonomous," relates to students' efforts to become independent and to free themselves from the need for continual approval and acceptance. Students need to achieve a balance between writing independently and collaboratively, between writing for oneself and writing for approval or a grade. This vector leads to this question:

—How can a person's level of independence affect his or her writing process?

Growth in the fourth vector, "Establishing Identity," is measured by the ways in which individuals discover essential features about themselves. As a pivotal point for all the vectors, establishing identity draws upon all the vectors, and yet there are certain questions specific to establishing identity.

Confrontations related to identity are an inescapable part of the writing process. No matter what the assignment, writing is personal because as we write, we express our ideas and feelings, showing part of ourselves to the world. This is one of the most challenging aspects of writing in college since the college environment will create confusions about identity which surface quickly in writing styles, content, and especially in the voices students adopt as they write.

To help students negotiate a path between writing and identity, it is useful to address this relationship directly by assigning freewriting topics that explore the general "writing identity" students bring to college. For example, exploring the following questions will help students see how writing has contributed and will continue to contribute to their identities:

—What is my "writing history"?

—What kinds of writing have I done that have been meaningful to me?

—What do I like about writing?

—What is hard for me about the writing process?

—What kinds of writing topics are most satisfactory for me?

—What does my writing style reveal about my identity?

—Do I use any particular expressions that are unique to my family or my community?

---Is my association with a geographical region revealed in my speech or writing?

---How can writing successfully enhance my identity as a student and as a communicator?

Growth in the fifth vector, "Freeing Interpersonal Relationships," relates to students' understanding of and appreciation for other individuals and their differences. As people become less anxious and defensive about their relationships, they assume more friendly and spontaneous approaches. Students also become more tolerant through an increased capacity to look beyond stereotypes. Student writers must develop an awareness of their readers as an audience for their ideas. Writers need to consider the needs of their readers as they compose and revise. In this task, these questions are relevant:

---How can students' views of interpersonal relationships affect their stance toward their readers?

---How might stereotypes influence a writer's choices in voice or tone?

Growth in the sixth vector, "Clarifying Purposes," relates to students' understandings of their personal aspirations, both vocational and avocational. Other issues include career plans and priorities, family aspirations, lifestyle choices, and recreational habits. Writers are continually clarifying the purpose of the writing project for themselves as well as for an instructor or other reader. This vector suggests these questions:

---How does the writer's sense of purpose affect her attitude and expectations for a writing project?

---How might a student's attitude toward writing and its purposes intersect with his or her sense of priorities and overall purpose?

Growth in the seventh vector, "Developing Integrity," focuses on how students identify and acknowledge a set of personal values. Values about work, expression, honesty, and clarity affect the development of writing abilities. Overcoming fear of self-expression is an important part of gaining self-confidence as a writer. Students may have difficulty articulating what they really want to say when they are unsure of their values. Asking these questions may help us understand some students' attitudes toward writing:

---What specific values are crucial to the development of writing abilities?

---How can instructors help shape positive values about writing?

"Student writers must develop an awareness of their readers as an audience for their ideas. Writers need to consider the needs of their readers as they compose and revise."

William Perry and Writing Instruction

Like any other theoretical model, Perry's (1970) scheme for understanding intellectual and moral development can be useful for illuminating certain aspects of concern to teachers. However, we must also be careful not to "overapply" the theory in circumstances where it is not truly relevant. In his essay, "Response Styles and Ways of Knowing," Anson (1989) carefully shows how Perry's scheme can be helpful to writing instructors.

Perry's scheme, which identifies people as operating within a set of intellectual stages, will help us understand why a student might respond in a very limited fashion to a writing topic about which our culture has inculcated fixed attitudes or opinions. Perry's scheme also

can help us understand students' reactions to our responses to their writing—in particular, their abilities to integrate the teacher's perceptions about the way in which they developed an argument. Finally, Perry's scheme helps, to some degree, explain why students are initially resistant to revising their writing once they consider it completed.

Dualism and the Development of Writing Abilities

In considering Perry's theory with respect to teaching, writing, and learning how to write, it is useful to focus on the individual's movement from being a "dualistic" writer to being a "reflective" one. Briefly, students who approach a writing assignment from a dualistic framework are looking only for right and wrong answers. When a student is taking a dualistic approach to writing, he or she believes that the teacher is the ultimate authority; in order to write well, one has to please the teacher and write according to the teacher's prescriptions. When a student writes from within a dualistic perspective, he or she "splits" a subject into two possibilities: right and wrong. Following the "right" position acknowledges the teacher's authority, obeys his or her rules, and should therefore result in a grade of A. When students have failed to find the "right" way to proceed with an assignment, they assume they didn't know exactly what the teacher wanted. Many students perceive that there is only one right way to write an essay. Their goals include "psyching out" the teacher to discover that right way and then writing the essay according to those principles.

When students take this position toward "correct" writing, they eliminate for themselves the aspect of choice and decision-making involved in the writing process. Instead of making their own choices, they only want to do "what the teacher wants." This position is commonly represented through the comment, *"I don't know if this is what you want."* The idea that students might "want" something from their writing isn't possible. If we want students to become responsible, inter-dependent learners, we must always show them how they are in control of their learning. When students ask, while showing you a draft, *"Is this what you want?"* they are asking you to confirm that they are pleasing you. To turn the writing back to the student—the rightful owner—an instructor can reply, *"Well, let's see: is this what you wanted to do with this topic?"*

While adhering to the conviction that teachers should tell them how to write correctly, dualistic writers are likely to resist making their own decisions about how to proceed. They assume that there is one correct way to write about a topic, both in terms of form and content, and they will feel frustrated when a teacher encourages them to make their own decisions. Teachers may be tempted to give in to such students and to dictate form and content. Yet, this approach will not foster growth toward becoming a "relativistic" writer. Instead, teachers will have to work patiently with students while these students learn to make their own decisions as writers. Teachers will have to be conscious that students need to receive positive reinforcement as decision-makers in order to develop enough confidence to move toward becoming "relativistic" writers.

The Relativistic Writer

Relativistic writers still look towards the teacher as an authority who holds all the cards, but they also feel that diversity in ideas and expression is acceptable—even necessary. As they open themselves to new possibilities, they may entertain all possibilities, and consequently have a hard time taking a clear stance in their writing. Relativistic writers may demonstrate skepticism or frustration with the teacher's expert response to their writing; they may reject the teacher's judgments and not understand a grade.

Students who seem to be in a relativistic frame of mind while writing will benefit from clear and concrete responses to their ideas and expression, responses that are objective and based on observable elements. For example, relativistic writers might express themselves vaguely because they haven't been able to take a solid stance toward an idea. Students often avoid writing a thesis statement because they are not certain of their opinion, or if they are, lack confidence in the value of their opinion. Talking about main ideas in a conference can help students learn to value their own ideas and then feel confident expressing them. But instructors should be careful in framing responses so that we do not put students on the defensive and thus block their abilities to hear our ideas. If we say, *"Your writing is unclear and vague,"* the writer really will not know how the writing was ineffective and will therefore attribute the problem to the instructor, who obviously just disagrees with the student. But if writers receive more objective feedback, based on the teacher's reading experience, they can begin to see how their choices as writers contributed to the ineffectiveness of the

writing. For example, to show students how their choices affected you as a reader, use an objective reader-response comment that begins with *"I"* and then describes what happened to you while you were reading the student's writing. Instead of penning in the margin, *"Vague,"* tell a student in conference, *"I can't follow your idea in this sentence because you used the passive tense,"* or *"I was looking for your main idea in this first section, but I couldn't find it."*

The Reflective Writer

Students who write relativistically, unable to take definitive stands on issues, can evolve toward becoming "committed relativists" or reflective writers when they receive encouragement and specific feedback. As reflective writers, they will consider multiple possibilities as they approach a writing assignment, but they will not be stalled by their own inabilities to take a stance because they can become comfortable, secure, and confident in their intellectual development. We can expect that these writers will be able to handle multiple perspectives on an issue, yet find their own way through difficult topics. They bring this maturity to their writing, which begins to look clear, convincing, and reasonable. In peer-group review sessions, reflective writers hold their own, yet know how to listen to others' ideas and consider new perspectives. Unfortunately, we are unlikely to work with many reflective writers in freshman seminar courses, and thus must commit ourselves as teachers to assisting dualistic and relativistic writers along the path to maturity of expression, thought, and confidence in decision making.

Conclusion: Writing in Freshman Seminars

Writing assignments can be tailored to the developmental issues identified in freshman seminar courses. Both the process and the topic of the writing task can reflect particular developmental concerns. Doing this, however, means that the instructor will be actively involved in the entire composing process; the instructor does not just "give an assignment" and wait for the student to hand it in. In a sense, the instructor's intervention and guidance makes him or her a collaborator or writing partner for the student. Yet such active involvement does not necessitate a great deal of extra work for the instructor. When students get more guidance in the beginning and middle of a writing task, they produce better writing that is more satisfying to them and to the instructor, probably will take less time to read and grade, and certainly will not require the kind of agony over grading papers that just don't address an assignment or are not readable. It can thus actually be a time-saver. The time that you will spend working with students throughout their writing process will pay off in improved final drafts, better attitudes about writing, increased student development, and in your morale and sense of success as a teacher.

In the next chapter, we will look at specific ways to integrate writing into freshman seminar courses so as to foster development. The view that we can most effectively help students develop—as writers, people, and learners—by emphasizing the process of development rather than the product will guide you through considerations of designing assignments, responding to writing, and grading. The emphasis will be upon becoming a part of the student's writing process without becoming a controlling collaborator who suggests words, phrases, or ideas. Additionally, the information in the next chapter is designed to help you become a more effective writing teacher, not a more overwhelmed one.

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Chapter Two

Write it More than Once: The Benefits of a Process Approach

In this chapter, a discussion of the various stages in the writing process emphasizes that writing is a recursive activity which complements the overall "review of self" occurring in the first year of college. We will consider specifically how various stages of the writing process can be used to foster adjustment to college. In the last section, a description of an extended writing project provides a model of an approach for integrating the writing process into a freshman seminar course.

Current composition pedagogy emphasizes a "process approach" to instruction, revision, and evaluation, and recent research supports the fact that this approach is more effective than an earlier emphasis simply on producing and grading a written product. Taking a process approach to teaching writing actively involves an instructor in the student's development. The instructor does not just "give an assignment" and then wait for the student to hand it in. Instead, the instructor participates and guides the student through the process of composing. The time that you will spend working with students throughout their writing process will pay off in the improved final drafts, in their development, in their attitude, and in your morale and sense of success as a teacher.

The Ever Changing Writing Process

As we consider these stages, which include prewriting and brainstorming, drafting, reviewing, revising, proofreading, and editing, we will want to recall that the writing process is complex and unpredictable, with features that change according to the writer and the assignment. For example, some writers need to spend more time on the beginning stages, struggling to get ideas before writing anything at all, and they might need to return to idea-gathering even while they are in the middle of the process. If students say, *"It's not the writing that I'm having trouble with; it's getting started!"* you might guess that they're indecisive about choosing a focus. On the other hand, another writer might easily begin the same assignment but need to spend more time refining paragraph organization, and returning frequently to editorial considerations involving the order of sentences within an individual paragraph. Although we can illustrate for students an ideal model of the recursive writing process, it's important to be alert as instructors and to alert our students to the idea that the process varies tremendously from person to person and from project to project.

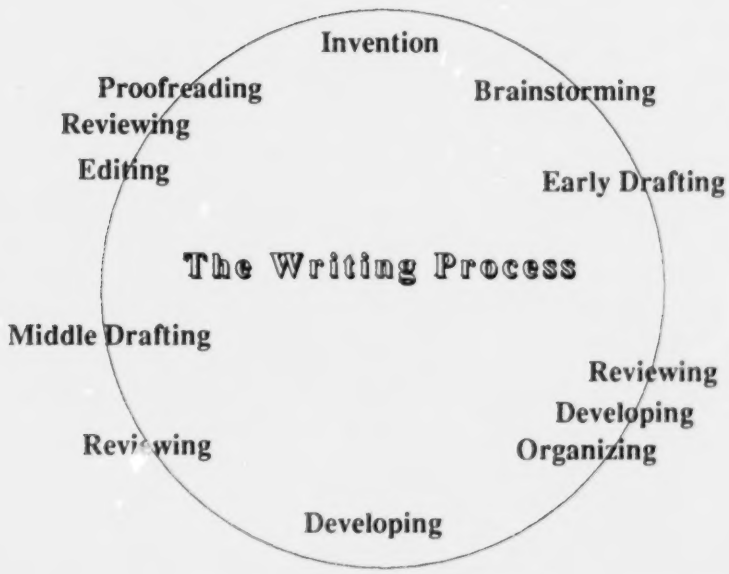
Overview of the Writing Process

Before discussing specific assignments, it will be useful to discuss a recursive or cyclical model of the writing process. The ways in which you give and respond to an assignment should be determined by how a student is proceeding through this model, but it is a good idea to respond to student writing often during any particular assignment.

Being aware of a student's progress helps you and the student in several ways. First, by checking topics and early writing, you can help students avoid writing essays that do not fit your assignment. When you review middle drafts, you can suggest ideas for revision that help students recognize how much work is left to be done. Finally, because you have seen an essay in its early and middle stages, you can be certain that a student has not plagiarized an essay. Checking on writing throughout the composing process may seem like a lot of extra work, but remember that brief conversations while writers are "in the middle" of their work help avoid extensive conferences later. Also, you can place yourself at the door five or ten minutes before class ends, and, as students leave class, you can check their progress quickly by having them prepare and show to you a short memo to you about their ideas or revisions.

Invention

At the beginning of a recursive or cyclical model of the writing



process is the invention stage, a series of moments during which writers gather ideas and "get started." During this stage, writers may think alone or in groups, use specific brainstorming techniques, plan their writing, or "rehearse" it. Invention not only begins the writing process, but it also recurs throughout the writing process as students continually discover new things to say as they write. In this way, invention may be perhaps the most recursive feature of the writing process.

Brainstorming is a specific technique for getting ideas. Some brainstorming activities include small-group discussion of a topic, large-class discussion with individuals writing lists of ideas on the board, and individual freewriting activities.

Freewriting is another specific invention-related activity. When freewriting, people suspend their apprehensions about form, correctness, structure, and coherence, and simply write as much as possible in a limited time. Timed freewriting activities are useful for getting students started. When you give an instruction such as, *"Now write for ten minutes about your experiences during your first week on campus,"* you should also include comments such as, *"Just write without worrying about grammar or spelling. It's important just to write as much as you can and get your ideas out on paper."* Students may be incredulous that they should not write perfectly the first time they lay pen to paper, but freewriting has been found to be a good way to generate ideas for revision, for small-group discussion, and to help narrow topics. With practice over a term, students will also find that freewriting helps them to increase their fluency in writing and their confidence. Of course freewriting is a mess! But with that first mess, there is something to be pondered and revised.

Responding to writing in the invention stage

As writers are beginning to gather ideas and experiment, instructor response should be limited, allowing room for the writer to explore independently and make decisions about choosing a topic. It is crucial at this point that writers feel they are choosing their own topics; many students report that the kind of writing they most dislike and on which they do most poorly is a required assignment that allows no room for choice. When instructors respond to early drafts or invention material, they can affirm and confirm a student's choices or redirect a topic that is not in line with the assignment.

Exchanging invention material with other students. Instructors do not really need to read any material written during the invention stage; peer review can be used alone to provide encouragement and feedback. After students have completed some freewriting, they can exchange their material in small groups, just reading what each person has written. Following this reading exchange, students can discuss ideas together.

Your primary role at this stage should be to confirm for students that they are heading in a productive direction. You may want to

allow ten minutes at the end of a class simply to check the topic and focus with each student in order to hear from the students that they have made a choice and are ready to proceed. It is important to ask students to write topic and focus statements on paper, and then to follow this brief task with a spoken interaction that requires them to state their intentions orally to you. In most cases, you will need only to nod and say, *"That sounds fine,"* but you may hear statements that do not reflect your assignment, and you can ask a student to reconsider a topic in that light.

Early Drafting

Freewriting and brainstorming lead writers into their first drafts. Following peer-reading sessions, during which students exchange freewriting, read it aloud to each other, and make comments that are strictly non-judgmental or evaluative, writers can choose ideas that they have generated and work towards a more sustained, focused draft. Often, starting in the middle of an essay helps unblock a writer who is struggling to write the perfect first paragraph, can't get it right, and never gets past that effort. It's hard, after all, to write a first paragraph that is supposed to introduce or summarize the main ideas in an essay before the entire essay has been composed, especially when we recognize how much discovery occurs during the composing process. Again, students will be astonished at the advice, *"Why don't you just skip your first paragraph and go on to the middle?"* because it breaks too many rules about their assumptions about the right way to write an essay. However, they must learn that writing well involves making choices and considering the purpose of each choice rather than slavishly following rules.

Peer review of early drafts. A first draft is just that: first. It is focused, perhaps, but probably not well organized, fully developed, or coherent. It is a start, however, and an important one. On the day that you ask for a full first draft, plan on having students read their work again to each other and provide feedback to their peers. It will be important to provide careful instructions about how to respond to a peer's writing so that students are not merely giving an affirmative nod, over-praising, or over-criticizing. You will need to provide mini-scripts for peer-response, such as, *"I want to know more about your ideas in the second paragraph,"* or *"I had a similar experience to the one you describe"*—comments that lead students towards discussing ideas rather than style at this stage. Peer responses to writing should be non-judgmental. Students gain confidence and skills cumulatively through peer review and, above all, learn that their writing has a real audience beyond the instructor. As they gain interest in another's writing, they become more committed to improving their own.

Instructor response to early drafts. Again, it is important to remember that a first draft is a very early draft, and writers feel self-conscious receiving feedback on work that they know is not polished or finished. But your response as an expert reader will be extremely important to your students. First-year college writers generally are weakest in development because they have not been previously required to explain their ideas, to "show"

"Peer responses to writing should be non-judgmental. Students gain confidence and skills cumulatively through peer review and, above all, learn that their writing has a real audience beyond the instructor."

"Middle drafts will be more developed than early drafts, but they may lack clear and strong organizational patterns or transitional words or sentences between paragraphs. . . During this stage, it's time to provide strategies for reading and revising for organization and coherence, and to suggest ways to create purposeful conclusions."

their thinking or create vivid descriptions. You will need to provide direction for development by continuing to identify places in their early drafts that can be expanded.

At this stage, students need some affirmation that they are "on the right track" and are developing interesting and sound ideas. Limit your responses to providing this kind of affirmation as well as identifying points that can be further developed or explained. Try not to be overly directive in your comments or suggestions; that is, avoid telling a writer how to develop an idea, but say, for example, *"Your idea here intrigues me. What else can you tell me about it?"* Suggest that students use the "question words"—*who, what, where, when, how,* and *why* —as they read their own material. You can show them how to use each of these words in response to sentences they have written to form questions that will lead them to discover ways to develop their writing.

Middle Drafts

When writers reach the middle stage of the writing process, they have already produced a revised draft and are ready to reconsider their writing more specifically. Middle drafts will be more developed than early drafts, but they may lack clear and strong organizational patterns or transitional words or sentences between paragraphs. Additionally, writers usually feel at this stage that their conclusions are weak. During this stage, it's time to provide strategies for reading and revising for organization and coherence, and to suggest ways to create purposeful conclusions.

Be selective in your response. It is hard to read one's own writing carefully. Therefore, writers need specific techniques to help them learn how to focus their reading for identifying specific features in personal writing. As the instructor, you will need to decide what features are important and desirable and then provide reading techniques that focus on those features. For example, if you want to see a strong thesis statement, then ask students to read specifically to identify such a statement. Give a direction such as, *"After you have read the essay through once, reread the first paragraph and underline the thesis statement. Now reread the rest of the essay and determine if the writer has really explained this idea. If the writer hasn't, make suggestions about ways he or she could either change the thesis to fit the essay, or rework the essay to fit the thesis."*

Peer review in the middle stages. A combination of peer-review and independent reading should be used at this stage. As students practice reading the writing of others, they build skills to read their own work more carefully. Additionally, when students find that they agree with peers' comments about their writing, their reading abilities are reinforced, and they gain confidence in their development as independent editors of their own work. When they disagree with their peers' comments, they learn that not everyone sees things the same way and that, finally, they must make their own decisions about how to proceed with their work while integrating others' responses. It would be appropriate in the middle stages to ask students to respond to specific features in a peer's writing. For example, ask students to read and identify the main idea in the

writing and then check to see if their view of the main idea matches that of the writer. Decisions to revise the main statement can follow from this conversation.

Instructor response to middle drafts. Students will probably seek affirmation from you at this stage that their essay is "okay." You may need to provide some feedback indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the middle draft, recognizing that the student considers this draft almost complete and may be unwilling to revise it substantially unless you indicate that it's really necessary. Again, respond to those features that you have identified as important in the assignment. It's impossible to try to respond to all features of writing—from spelling to organization—all at once, and doing so will only overwhelm the writer. It's better to limit your response to selected features, recognizing that student writing abilities are developing, and, that in subsequent assignments, you will see growth in other areas you haven't targeted this time.

Editing and Proofreading

All through the writing process, you may have noticed errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, but by the time a student gets through a middle draft, he or she will probably have corrected most errors alone. It's wise not to point out such errors until writers are almost finished because focusing on errors when a writer needs to focus on development or organization will lead a writer away from the main purpose of the assignment. The time to talk about proofreading and editing is when the writer feels he or she is almost finished. Even then, it is best if you discuss errors individually with each writer, rather than spend class time reviewing and boring students with grammatical explanations, most of which they have heard before and have never integrated into their own writing. If you do not have the time for individual conferences, refer students for tutorial help at your campus writing center where trained tutors can give assistance tailored specifically to the students' needs.

Reading strategies for proofreading

There are several effective reading techniques you can teach that will help students learn to edit their own work. Effective proofreading requires that writers slow down their reading and simultaneously read closely and carefully. Present the following techniques in a workshop when students have time to experiment with your guidance:

Reading aloud. Ask students to read their writing aloud to a partner. They will find errors as they read.

Slowing down the reading process. Suggest that students read with a pencil in hand, moving the pencil from word to word only after they have read each word closely and carefully.

Rereading for specific kinds of errors writers typically make. For example, some students may want to reread, looking only for one specific spelling error, such as the use of the apostrophe with contractions and possessives.

Reading backwards. Suggest that writers begin at the last word, reading each word carefully

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"When a student tells you, **'I'm not really satisfied with this, but here it is,'** *you know you've done your job: they will only be reluctant to give up a piece of writing after they have begun to learn what really makes good writing."*

before moving onto the next. While this process will effectively catch spelling mistakes, it will not help identify errors due to sentence structure, punctuation, or grammar.

Using a spell-checker on a computer. Students may need some assistance as they learn to use a spell-checker properly so that they do not simply hit "skip" each time the computer identifies a possible error.

Worrying about grammar. A great deal of research has been conducted over the last 70 years to demonstrate that teaching formal grammar has no positive effect on improving students' writing. In fact, teaching formal grammar may have negative effects because such instruction takes time away from the real practice of writing and focuses a writer's attention on correcting mistakes rather than developing ideas.

Students will usually be concerned about their grammar because they have had years of schooling that reinforces the idea that writing is grammar. If they come from secondary school backgrounds where grammar was emphasized over writing, your students may have very limited vocabularies for talking about writing, and so you may hear them say, *"I'm worried about my grammar,"* or *"I'm a terrible speller."* Ask students to point out places in their writing that they think contain grammatical errors, and expect that they will, instead, start talking about ideas or style, which are the topics they are really concerned about but did not have the vocabulary to introduce.

Final Drafts

Final drafts are finished products—sort of. After students have worked through the writing process, they will never feel that they are really ready to submit an essay for a grade, because they will be aware of all the things they could redo. When a student tells you, *"I'm not really satisfied with this, but here it is,"* you know you've done your job: they will only be reluctant to give up a piece of writing after they have begun to learn what really makes good writing.

A final self-assessment. Before grading final drafts, ask students to do their own review of their work. Because your students will have revised their essays multiple times and will have a clear awareness of their strengths and remaining weaknesses, they will want to tell you about their responses to the assignment. When students are ready to submit their writing to you, first ask them to write a "cover letter" to you in which they explain their experiences in writing this assignment. Use these questions to direct the students' responses:

1. *What was easiest for you to do in this assignment? What was hardest?*

2. *How long did you work on this assignment? At what points did you run into blocks or other problems?*

3. *What kind of assistance (from peers, tutors, or me) was helpful to you?*

4. *Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the writing as you perceive them.*

5. *If you could rewrite this essay once more, what would you work on?*

Their final "self-assessment" will be useful in several ways. First, it helps them reflect on the writing experience and articulate what they have learned. Second, it helps you understand their writing process. Third, it initiates a plan for the next writing task; and fourth, it helps you assess the writing from the student's perspective, getting feedback about the assignment so that you can revise it if necessary. Also, students, when given a chance, generally assess their own work very honestly and accurately, and the instructor's "expert" responses match their assessments.

Grading

It's hard to grade writing—there is simply no way to avoid that fact. But responding to student writing from its beginning and through its various stages eases the grading process. It is especially challenging to make comments that help students understand their strengths and weaknesses in a particular assignment. However, with a purposeful plan for your assessment of student writing, you can streamline your responses without sacrificing thoroughness.

Determine the purpose for grading. While you are writing your syllabus, consider your grading principles, and determine a plan that fits your purpose. Obviously, in a course such as a freshman seminar that is not designed specifically as a writing intensive course, you can neither teach nor grade for all writing elements. You will have to choose which elements to emphasize, depending upon your own priorities. In making these choices, consider which elements really help foster growth in writing, in learning, in thinking, and in personal and social development.

For example, suppose you have asked students to write a report on an interview with library reference staff. Teaching and evaluating the focus of such a report reinforces their need to know what is most important about using the current periodical room, interlibrary loan, or the reserve desk. Additionally, such a focus might include information about how to request information from library staff, and this task reinforces communication skills with campus personnel.

As you create a grading strategy, ask yourself these four questions in order to determine the writing elements you wish to assess:

1. What is the purpose of this writing task?

2. What do I want the students to learn as a result of this writing task?

3. What features of writing do I want to assess in a final draft? Am I willing to provide instruction in these areas?

4. Which features of writing and understanding are most important for me to assess? How can I weigh different features in a grading system?

Recognize that you are obliged to provide instruction in writing elements you choose to assess. In other words, you can't grade students on thesis statements unless you have explained what your expectations are for a thesis statement, given them strategies for checking and revising their thesis statements, and responded to their early or middle draft thesis statements.

"It's hard to grade writing—there is simply no way to avoid that fact. . . However, with a purposeful plan for your assessment of student writing, you can streamline your responses without sacrificing thoroughness."

"Instead of marking errors in the writer's text, you may choose to put checks along the margin in lines where there are mistakes, and then ask the writer to review the writing again, finding the errors in those lines . . . You will be able to tell what kinds of errors they actually cannot find because they are unfamiliar with the rules."

Streamline your written response. Research shows that students do not effectively read nor utilize marginal comments that instructors make (often laboriously) on their writing. So if you were planning on taking out your red pen (ouch!) and writing at length along the sides of your students' work, put your pen back and reconsider the purpose of your comments. Consider yourself a respondent, not a professional proofreader or editor.

Categorize your comments. Research does show us that categorizing errors for writers and commenting generally on the categories will be helpful because when writers know what kinds of mistakes they generally make, they can learn to read for them when editing and proofreading. So, instead of marking every sentence fragment in the text, it will be more useful to write a comment at the end of the paper, such as, *"You need to review and proofread for sentence fragments."*

Identifying errors in the margins of a student's writing either by correcting them or by pointing them out through an editing system can actually sabotage the learning process: if you point out all the errors for the writer, he or she will never learn to find them. Instead of marking errors in the writer's text, you may choose to put checks along the margin in lines where there are mistakes, and then ask the writer to review the writing again, finding the errors in those lines. Going through this process helps writers develop sharper proofreading skills as they start to narrow their line of vision while reading for errors. You will also be able to tell what kinds of errors they actually cannot find because they are unfamiliar with the rules.

Explain and assess categories through a point system. If you have chosen, for example, to assess these writing features—focus, development, organization, and clarity—use these terms as categories for your comments at the end of a student's essay. You must also, however, know how you are assessing these individual terms and explain that to the students.

For example, you could identify "focus" as a clear thesis statement in one essay and assess that feature. In another essay, you could explain that "focus" also includes following through with strong topic sentences; and, in this second assignment, you would assess both the thesis statement and the topic sentences. "Development" could include explanations, analysis, or descriptions, depending upon your interpretation of the term. "Clarity" could be a general category for clear expression, including categories of specific errors.

Assign points for each category that fit the purpose of the assignment and the course, and take into account the amount of instruction that you provided in that element. For example, you might spend most of your time in class discussing focus and development and very little time talking about or proofreading for errors. Therefore, you would want to assign more points in the categories of focus and development than clarity. Later in a term, you might want to emphasize the need to communicate clearly and correctly and therefore dedicate more class time to proofreading strategies and require students to receive tutorial help in this area. It might be

appropriate, therefore, to increase the number of points in the "clarity" category.

Identify strengths and weaknesses. If you have explained your use of terms, listing categories and giving points in each category lets a student know what areas they need to work on in the future. You may also want to provide additional general feedback on strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing what student writers did well rather than what they did poorly. We learn more from positive than negative feedback, although it is sometimes easier to respond negatively. By first identifying and listing particular strengths and then particular weaknesses in student writing, instructors can say something positive to the writer before articulating the weaknesses.

Using the Process Approach in Student Writing Assignments

Freshman seminars often address many topics and issues, any one of which can become the focus for writing assignments. Following is a suggested step-by-step process for assigning and evaluating a typical student essay.

Step One: Identify and Define the Assignment

State the assignment clearly in writing and orally. Limit your assignment statement to one or two sentences; do not make the assignment so complex that students are confused or unsure of what you are requesting.

Sample Assignment. **Describe and explain your purposes and goals for attending college.**

To further elaborate on your assignment, define the key words, and suggest topics students can consider. In this project, explain "describe" and "explain," emphasizing that "describe" means to provide objective statements about a college choice, and "explain" means to provide subjective commentary.

Step Two: Begin Brainstorming Activities

Class discussion. Ask the class to list possible ways to approach the topic. They may list these items individually and then write several items from their lists on the board. Ask students to consider brainstorming questions that will lead to ideas: Why did you choose this college? Who influenced your decision? What do you hope to achieve while in college?

Individual freewriting. Ask students to freewrite for ten minutes about one topic identified during class discussion.

Peer exchange. In small groups, students exchange their freewriting, with instructions only to read the writing in order to understand the writer's idea. One person in each group is identified as a recorder. After each student has read all of the writing in the group, the members discuss the general ideas they found in the writing. The recorder notes the ideas during the discussion and brings these ideas to a whole-class discussion.

Step Three: Continue Invention Activities Individually

Give an out-of-class writing assignment that helps students

"If you have explained your use of terms, listing categories and giving points in each category lets a student know what areas they need to work on in the future."

"Oral presentations of written work help integrate speaking and writing skills. Before students finish their final drafts, request that they prepare a three-minute presentation of their ideas to their small group."

generate early draft material. For example, ask them to write for 20 minutes on two topics listed during class discussion.

Step Four: Identify a General Plan for the Essay

Present a general outline of how the essay might be developed. Students will want to follow this slavishly, resulting in writer's block for those who believe they have to write exactly as you suggest. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that your plan is only one way to proceed. A general outline, however, identifies major components of the essay.

Sample Plan.

Introductory section - Introduce your main idea about your college choice. Briefly explain your idea.

Middle Section - Develop your main idea by giving details about your choice. Describe the major factors that helped you make your decision. Devote a separate paragraph to each factor that you choose to explain in detail.

Concluding section - Assess the present and anticipate the future. Explain your present attitude toward your choice. Identify possible problems and ways you might solve them.

Step Five: Respond to an Early Draft

Request that students bring a completed early draft to class on a specific day. Working in pairs, they can exchange these drafts and respond globally to each other's writing. You may also want to ask students to respond specifically to one writing element, such as a main idea statement.

Ask students to prepare a revision plan that they will show to you and briefly discuss individually. In their plan, they should state one or two things they plan to work on as they write the next draft.

As you check these plans, comment on the specificity of the proposal. For example, *"I'm going to develop my ideas"* isn't specific enough, but *"I'm going to explain how my brother influenced my decision"* is specific.

Step Six: Repeat Writing Workshop and Peer Review of Middle Drafts

Depending upon your goals and time limitations, you may decide to repeat the writi[illegible] workshop and peer review of middle drafts, including the revision plan statements and the mini-conference with you.

Step Seven: Oral Presentations in Small Groups

Oral presentations of written work help integrate speaking and writing skills. Before students finish their final drafts, request that they prepare a three-minute presentation of their ideas to their small group. In these presentations, they should identify their main and supporting ideas. The small-group activity should conclude with a written task that helps students articulate what they have learned from their classmates. Following the presentations, ask students to write a response to what they heard: how were other people's experiences the same or different from their own? What was most interesting?

Step Eight: Teach Proofreading Techniques

Always allow time in class to practice proofreading on "almost" final drafts. Give students one or two techniques at a time. As their skills build, they will be able to use multiple techniques simultaneously; but at the beginning, show them how to slow down their reading and attend to each individual printed word.

Step Nine: Submit the Final Draft

On the day that the project is due, plan ten minutes for a self-assessment. Ask students to submit their assessment on the very top, with the final draft next, and all early draft material placed beneath. Collecting early writing helps you assess the effort and time a student gave to the project, and again, assures you that the writing is not plagiarized.

Step Ten: Grading and Conferencing

After you have read and commented on the students' projects, it is most productive, although time-consuming, to return graded work during conferences. Students will receive their grades more positively if you speak briefly with them about the strengths and weaknesses of their work. In such conferences, identify what you liked about the writing, and then make suggestions for strengthening the writing if the student should choose to revise.

Step Eleven: Revision

Allowing students to revise an essay after it has been graded is a controversial technique. Some teachers feel that it encourages students not to do their best work the first time around. However, allowing revisions does "keep the door open" for learning about writing and for maturing as a college student. If you choose to allow revisions, set guidelines: revisions must be turned in one week after students receive the graded draft; students must describe a revision plan to you before they submit a revision; and revisions must be substantial, not merely the correcting of spelling errors.

Sample Student Writing

The essay that follows is a final draft that was revised several times. The student was writing in response to the assignment, *"Describe the relationship between your career goals and a college education."* As you read the essay, notice how this writer is comfortable with his own voice; he frequently cites himself "thinking aloud," and he is also open about his process of personal discovery. Without this level of comfort with himself, the writing process would not have been a process of discovery. He was not afraid to confront, in writing, his struggles with choosing a major.

In determining his grade, it was important to consider his honesty and lively voice, both of which contributed to the solid development and focus. However, he had not fulfilled one requirement of the course—to submit all early drafts with the final draft—nor had he shown evidence of working with a tutor, an activity which was strongly recommended. Before the final essay grade—a nine out of a possible ten—are listed first the strengths and then the weaknesses of the student's writing.

"Collecting early writing helps you assess the effort and time a student gave to the project, and again, assures you that the writing is not plagiarized."

A Good Reason for College

Ty McKenzie

The experts say that the average college student will change his mind about his major at least three times. For me, this has been more than true. I have probably changed my mind about professions at least six times since I started thinking about why I want to be in college. Right now, I feel very positive about my choice to be here in this school, with a marketing major. It wasn't an easy decision to make, but I know that it has been my own decision, and that helps me feel that it's the right one.

When I was little, I always had the usual dreams of a glamorous job as a professional athlete, or maybe even a fireman. At that time, those dreams felt so real that I thought I would do one of those things for sure. Unfortunately, everyone has to grow up sooner or later, and their feelings and knowledge about certain careers change. No longer did I want to be a fireman, because I was no longer that carefree ten-year-old boy who didn't really have a sense of life or death: everything was simply fun. During my senior year of high school, I began to ask myself what I wanted to do in life. I asked myself, "Do you really want to have a job where you're active, or do you want to have a desk job?" and "Are you willing to sacrifice a higher salary just so you can continue with your track and field activities?" These answers varied from day to day, but I did manage to answer one question: I want to have fun in whatever job I get.

The list of questions about my career choice was endless. I would keep asking myself the same questions every day, but still would not have any answers for them. Then one day, about a week away from the end of the first semester of my senior year of high school, I heard a voice in my head yelling at me. Naturally, I was talking to myself, but it didn't seem like it was provoked by anything, so I kept listening. The voice paused for a second, then said, "What are you doing? All you have been talking about lately is what you want to do when you get out of college, but you haven't even picked a college to go to yet! You have to learn how to walk before you can run!"

Then it hit me. I realized I was sounding like my parents, but this time, the questions were coming from me, not them. I knew that I was facing the fact that it was time to grow up. I could not put the future on hold any longer. So I began my quest for choosing the right college. This time, the questions were a lot more detailed: "What state would you like to go to college in? How big of a school would you like to go to? What is the average class size? How good is their track and field program?" and finally, one question that was really important, "What is the proportion of men and women students?" These questions helped me narrow my choices, and by the end of the first semester of my senior year, I had decided to come here. Now that I am in college, I find that I keep changing my ideas about what I would like to do. Sometimes I think I want to be a lawyer—this would be challenging and well paying. But it is mostly desk work, so I have decided against it. I considered becoming a psychiatrist, but I don't think I want to go to medical school. Recently, I've heard "that voice" again, yelling at me, but sending me in what feels like the right direction. "Why don't you just consider what you're best at? You can talk just about anyone into anything, and you haven't even thought about something in that area!"

Since this idea occurred to me, I've decided that marketing is the right field for me. However, my long range goals include teaching marketing, so I will want to go to graduate school. Teaching will allow me to have a career with people, work with sales strategies, and continue my track activities. I hope that with hard work and determination, the rest of college will go the way I plan.

Strengths: Your "voice" is honest and interesting; I especially like the quotations of the "voice" yelling at you. I could easily follow the process you went through to make your decision about your major.

Weaknesses: I want to know more about your parents' role in helping you choose a college. Was anyone else helpful? Explain about track and field. Why was that important in your choice?

Grade: 9 (out of a possible 10). *Focus:* 2 *Development:* 1.5 *Clarity:* 2 *Voice:* 2 *Effort:* 1.5

(Your early drafts were missing. Also, did you confer with a tutor at the Writing Center?)

Suggested Readings

Donovan, T., & McClelland, B. (Eds.). (1980). *Eight approaches to teaching composition.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Emig, J. (1971). *The composing process of twelfth graders.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Chapter Three

Building Successful Peer Groups in Writing

The benefits of using small-group discussion and activities in any course also apply to writing instruction. We know that small-group workshops give students opportunities to practice communication skills, to work collaboratively on specific tasks, and to develop comfort, confidence, and trust in the classroom environment. Yet these elements have to be carefully nurtured by the instructor through the design of peer-group workshops. As Thom Hawkins (1976) writes in *Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing*, "The small peer group provides a close approximation to the way communication takes place in the real world, but it is important that the classroom instructor knows how to encourage helpful relationships among students" (p. 5).

In regard both to developing writing skills and "helpful relationships," peer group work on writing tasks presents a few unique challenges. Many instructors are concerned with the quality of response that actually occurs during peer review of student-produced texts; they fear that the time spent in small groups will not change student writing very substantially. Additionally, it seems difficult to keep students "on task" during peer review. Instructors may observe that students take advantage of being in small groups to talk about subjects seemingly unrelated to the writing project, and it appears that the peer review sessions easily change into open discussion opportunities. Finally, instructors may feel that when they conduct small-group workshops, they are sacrificing too much time that they need for content discussion or lecture. All of these concerns are important, and there are ways to address them effectively. In this chapter, the focus is upon planning, organizing, and monitoring peer-group review of student writing so that the sessions meet your expectations for productivity.

Peer Review Has Multiple Benefits

Peer Groups Build Language Skills

Peer group interaction can be guided so that it builds college-level language skills in both speaking and writing. Because of the close relationship between our speaking and writing "identities," the skills that people develop as speakers help their writing abilities grow also. As students develop a "rhetorical" awareness of language behavior in small-group discussions, they are laying a groundwork for their written rhetorical awareness.

For a variety of reasons, many students will not participate in whole-class discussions, or they participate too frequently and disrupt the learning process for others. Small-group workshops can help both types of students become more effective communicators.

Some people are naturally quiet or inexperienced at speaking in front of groups. Others are not self-assured enough to speak up in front of an entire class because they fear the instructor's response to their comments or anticipate feeling foolish in front of their peers. On the other hand, some students regularly volunteer to respond to an instructor's questions and often dominate discussions, antagonize other students, or lead conversations astray. The key to helping both types of students learn to communicate more effectively is to provide concrete tasks and guidelines for discussion. The oral communication skills that students build during workshops carry over into their writing in significant ways: as students are learning how to speak and listen more carefully to one another, they are learning about audience, purpose, and style—crucial features of writing that students need to develop.

Peer Groups Build Self-Confidence

While in peer groups, students get a chance to practice college-level conversation with less risk than if they were speaking in front of the whole class. Developing the confidence to take risks while speaking—and experiencing success—will help students feel more confident about taking risks in their writing.

Small groups contribute to the creation of an overall class environment in which risk-taking is valued and rewarded. One way

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in which students can receive rewards for taking risks is through their recognition that the risk resulted in an achievement, such as finishing a small-group task successfully. Successful peer groups that build confidence in the use of language respond to structured tasks from an instructor but are still able to keep interactions informal and friendly. The comfort, confidence, and trust that students develop speaking in small groups will carry over into whole-class discussion and individual conversations with their instructors.

Instructors need to provide guidelines for small-group conversation so that these goals are not sabotaged by students who tend to dominate any kind of conversation or by student resistance to speaking in any situation. Each student must have a speaking role and a writing task that fit the overall objective of the small-group session.

Peer Review Broadens Students' Experiences

Although teachers may feel that the primary purpose for peer-review workshops is for students to gain ideas about revising their writing, students often identify the opportunity to read what others have written as the most valuable aspect of the workshop. Students simply enjoy the chance to see how others have lived their lives and have thought about their experiences. After overcoming an initial fear about having their own writing read by someone else, they also enjoy the experience of having an audience other than the instructor.

There are significant benefits from the sharing of writing that fit the purpose of freshman seminars. Small-group workshops focused on peer response to writing are rich with opportunities to help students develop in ways that are congruent with the schemata of developmental theorists such as Perry (1970) and Chickering (1978). By reading the writing of their peers, students broaden their perspectives on the world and thus are aided in their movement along Perry's scheme of development. Exchanging writing, in other words, helps students gain a reflective stance. By learning over the course of a school term how to communicate in a small group, to work collaboratively with peers, to listen and integrate responses to their writing as well as to offer helpful responses, students grow in Chickering's vectors of achieving competence, managing emotions, and developing interpersonal relationships. Again, instructors must provide specific tasks, guidelines, and even mini-conversations or "scripts" in order for students to reap optimal benefits from small-group writing workshops.

Objectives for Peer Review Workshops

Integrating peer-group review into the writing process allows for the development of reading, writing, and discussion skills. The first step in planning a peer-review session is to determine the skills you wish to see students develop. Because effective peer review involves four sets of skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—it is helpful to begin by listing objectives in each area. Asking yourself these questions will help you identify objectives for your students:

Speaking Skills

---With what kind of tone do I want students to speak to each other?

---What "mini-scripts" can I give them to help them achieve this tone?

---What kind of turn-taking do I want students to use?

---What instructions can I give them so that they take turns naturally?

Listening Skills

--- What should students listen for during conversations with peers?

---How can I help them learn to pick up cues for getting helpful information from peer responses?

---What mini-scripts will help students avoid becoming defensive or argumentative?

--- What techniques will help them hear their classmates' comments with greater sensitivity?

Reading Skills

---Which reading skills can be isolated during a peer response workshop?

---What kinds of directions will help students read for specific elements?

Writing Skills

---Which features of clear writing can students identify in one peer response workshop?

---What mini-scripts will help students talk to each other about specific features of clear writing?

This list of questions is fairly comprehensive; your responses to it should form enough material to direct small-group workshops for at least a full term. Choose those particular features that are congruent with the goals and objectives of your course.

Structuring and Monitoring Small Groups

Instructors need to give specific tasks that can be accomplished within the time restrictions available during class. The tasks should move from uncritical reading and open, nonjudgmental conversation to more focused reading, written responses, and focused conversations. Students are not familiar with the process of reading and responding to each other's essays; they have neither the reading skills for competently commenting on each other's writing nor the vocabulary and pedagogical expertise for helping each other. Therefore, they need guidance and practice to become helpful readers of each other's texts.

Instructors need to be patient as they watch students develop the abilities to help each other change their writing. After one or two peer sessions, you may not necessarily see substantial changes in your students' writing, but you will see their attitudes and their classroom performances change. They should become more comfortable, trusting, and active. After several more peer sessions, you will see them begin to help each other create ideas for effective revising.

Give Specific Directions

These three principles will help you lead students in effective small-group sessions in writing.

1. Set specific goals that involve focused and repetitive reading.

2. Ask students to hold focused conversations about what they have read.

"Instructors need to give specific tasks that can be accomplished within the time restrictions available during class."

"Most first-year college writers are weakest in two areas: focus and development."

3. Ask students to write a response to the peer review of their work and to formulate a revision plan.

The Peer Review Process, Step by Step

In this section, we will consider structuring, monitoring, and assessing a peer review workshop for a sample writing project. One of the first topics that you might address in a freshman seminar course is analyzing the differences between high school and college learning.

Step One - Present the Assignment Clearly and Specifically

Ask students to bring a completed early draft to class on a specific day for a writing workshop. Imagine that you have given this assignment to your students:

Describe and analyze differences between high school and college education. Draw upon your own experiences so far in college and your previous experiences in high school. Describe and explain the differences you notice in any of these areas: your personal lifestyle, expectations for class attendance and participation, the amount of homework, interactions with peers and professors, and the amount of free time available. Finally, assess the way in which you are adjusting to the differences you have discussed. Describe how you have been successful in adjusting, and identify those areas that are presenting difficulties for you.

Step Two - Set Specific Goals for the Workshop

Most first-year college writers are weakest in two areas: focus and development. To improve their writing in these areas, they need to learn how to make effective and limited choices in stating a main idea and explaining their main idea. With this assignment, you will expect students to make a global statement—which they may or may not recognize as a "thesis statement"—about the differences between high school and college learning. A global statement such as, "In college, you have to be more independent and disciplined to succeed," will focus an essay. This statement, for example, would allow a writer to choose specific subtopics from those listed in the assignment and to show how independence and discipline are needed in those areas. The tasks you provide for a writing workshop should ask students to identify a statement that responds to the assignment and focuses the writer's ideas. In terms of building skills in the development of an essay, this assignment is fairly complex, asking students to describe, analyze, and assess.

Because this assignment asks writers to perform these three kinds of critical thinking skills—description, analysis, and evaluation—it is important to create objectives that develop these skills. How you ask students to read and respond to each other's writing must address description, analysis, and evaluation. Remember that beginning college students will probably not understand what you mean by analysis; also, their preconceptions about what constitutes adequate description is limited. They will find it easier to assess or evaluate their own success because they are aware of how they are performing.

Therefore, reasonable goals for a writing workshop on this assignment would be to address four chief areas:

1. Identify a focusing statement in the beginning of the essay.

2. Identify analytical statements throughout the body of the essay.

3. Identify description passages throughout the body of the essay.

4. Identify personal evaluation in the conclusion.

With these goals in mind, you can create tasks for reading, discussing, and responding.

Step Three - Create Critical Reading Tasks

Students will need a set of specific directions to guide their reading. Remember that they should learn to read multiple times for multiple purposes. General principles for creating directions for close reading include these two:

1. Instruct students to read their classmate's essay once all the way through, without pausing to comment on it. Or ask that each student take a turn reading his or her draft aloud, without receiving responses from peers. After the oral reading, students then exchange drafts. They are then familiar with the writing in front of them and more prepared for closer readings. Oral reading of individual work allows students to hear their writing, a process that can change their perceptions of their own style and clarity.

2. Use specific guidelines for closer, critical readings that ask students to perform multiple readings with each reading focused on a single purpose.

The following directions for performing close, critical readings are congruent with the plan outlined above for developing writing skills. Notice that these directions ask students to read and mark essays in particular ways, but not to correct or comment on writing. Commentary on their findings from these directions will occur during the discussion section of the workshop. In this plan, students will be exchanging their writing with only one partner for a close, critical reading. They have already had the opportunity to read or hear all the essays written by classmates in their peer groups.

Sample Directions for Peer Reading

1. After you have read the essay all the way through, begin reading it again. This time, underline the focusing statement in the beginning of the essay that announces the writer's main idea about the differences between high school and college life.

2. Read the essay again, and this time, put checks in the margin by sentences in the middle paragraphs of the essay that show the writer's analysis of his or her observations about the differences between high school and college life. Remember that analytic sentences show how the writer understands or thinks about what he or she describes. These sentences should come at the beginning of middle paragraphs and will function as "topic sentences," which are main idea statements about the details in each paragraph.

3. Read the essay once more and put parentheses ( ) around sentences that provide descriptions of high school and college learning. Each middle paragraph should have numerous descriptive sentences that illustrate the analytical or main idea statements in each paragraph.

4. Read the last paragraph closely. Put brackets [ ] around those

"Students will need a set of specific directions to guide their reading . . .they should learn to read multiple times for multiple purposes."

"What novice critical readers do need to learn is how to provide statements that identify spots in the writing that were underdeveloped and need further explanation, description, or illustration."

sentences that show how the writer assesses or evaluates his or her adjustment to college learning.

Step Four - Create Goals for Discussion

Following the close-reading activity, students will need to discuss their findings with their partners. This discussion should be purposeful and should help writers discover discrepancies between their perceptions of their writing and the response of an actual reader.

Generally, students will praise each others' writing and will be reluctant to identify weaknesses. In the mini-scripts that you give students to help them through these discussions, take this stance into account. They do not need to identify weaknesses at this stage, and they *should* tell each other what they liked about one another's writing. The general praise that students will give each other is part of the affirming and confirming process that helps writers identify what they have done well. What novice critical readers *do* need to learn is how to provide statements that identify spots in the writing that were underdeveloped and need further explanation, description, or illustration.

Step Five - Create Mini-Scripts for Peer Discussion

To help students learn to provide responses to each other that help writers develop or clarify their writing, these four mini-scripts will be helpful:

Sample Mini-Scripts.

1. First, tell the writer what you liked about his or her essay, what you found most interesting, and what related to your own experiences in a similar or different way. For example, you can say, *"I enjoyed reading about your experiences in high school math class. It was interesting to see that you had a teacher who gave a lot of homework. In my math class, we did all our work in class."*

2. Tell the writer what you would like to know about. For example, you might say, *"I was interested in how your college math teacher is helpful to you. Can you tell me about how she answers your questions?"*

3. Show the writer where you identified focusing statements, analytical statements, descriptive statements, and evaluative statements. Ask the writer if these were the statements he or she intended to use in these ways. For example, ask *"Is this statement that I have underlined as your main idea really the main idea you have about the differences between college and high school learning?"*

4. Ask the writer what he or she would like most to add to the essay.

Step Six - Ask for a Revision Plan

As an instructor, you will want to assess the group workshop and, in particular, the value of the peer exchange and close reading. To do so, you will need a written response sheet from each student. There are two kinds of response records that you can collect.

1. Create a response sheet for the close-reading questions. A sample of such a sheet is at the end of this chapter.

2. Ask students to write their own revision plans following the discussion with their partner about their writing. Emphasize that they make the final decisions about how to

change their essays, but they should consider their partner's comments as they make their decisions. A sample of a revision plan worksheet is also at the end of this chapter.

Step Seven - Evaluate Group Effectiveness

To determine the value of the workshop, ask students to assess briefly their experiences in writing. A sample of this assessment instrument is at the end of the chapter.

Your Role During Workshops

Because small-group workshops are designed to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, your role as the course instructor will change radically during these workshops. It may be difficult at first for you to "let go" of controlling the learning, but for your workshop to succeed, you have to demonstrate to students that you *expect* they can learn on their own, without your interference. However, while small-group workshops are occurring, you still have an active presence in the classroom. You will become a facilitator, occasionally a mediator, the major director, and the resident expert. If you have the opportunity to involve a peer tutor in your classroom workshops, do so. Upper-class students will model effective college communication styles and content for first-year students in a way that instructors cannot.

The Facilitator

As the classroom facilitator, circulate among the small groups, especially at the beginning, noticing whether or not they understand your directions and are ready to work. Asking, *"Everything okay here?"* is a non-threatening and non-intrusive way to check on their process. Return once or twice more during the workshops asking the same question just to provide your students with the opportunity to check on their progress with you.

The Mediator and Expert

Occasionally, students will have a disagreement about the directions, their ideas, or particular aspects of writing. Students may ask you to resolve such disputes. You may want to answer some questions directly, but others you may choose to turn back to them. For example, if students are arguing over a rule of grammar or usage, you can certainly answer their question, but it's also helpful to encourage them to find the answer themselves by referring to a handbook. Other disputes of a more personal nature have to be handled carefully so that students do not interpret a peer's response as a "put-down" of their writing.

The Director

You will want to notice which groups are moving too far off task and suggest ways to help them refocus their conversation. This does not mean that conversation about related topics is to be utterly discouraged; in fact, you want to encourage students to have a good conversation about their ideas. Asking *"How's it going here?"* or *"Are you getting some ideas about your essays?"* should elicit responses from students that will let you know how far off task they really are. If the conversation has drifted too far from the assigned subject and task, point them back to the center by asking to see their revision plans.

As you are circulating, notice communication styles among students.

" . . . while small-group workshops are occurring . . . you will become a facilitator, occasionally a mediator, the major director, and the resident expert."

For example, observe body language and tone to identify resistant or hostile students who may choose complete silence or move outside of the group boundaries. You may need to address such students gently and quietly, but firmly: *"Sandra, how about moving closer to Jeanne so you can hear each other,"* or *"Carl, did you hear anything especially interesting when Alice read her essay?"*

In all of these roles, you are still letting students know that you are available to answer questions and provide additional direction for the workshop process. Your presence and support lets them know that you are interested in the learning that occurs during the workshop. They must know that you expect them to work responsibly and to be "in charge" of the interaction. Yet, they still must be able to draw upon your ideas and expertise, especially in during the early stages of learning to work collaboratively.

Conclusion

The writing workshop is an interactive approach to learning to write. In this approach, learning occurs in the classroom under the instructor's direction, but students are in control of the activities. Because writing workshops are student-centered, they will often result in more growth than is generated by traditional teacher-centered models. Although you will not have to plan lectures or discussions—and that will save you time—you do have to plan a process. As you determine the process for each workshop, remember to list your objectives, and keep each of the tasks concrete. Above all, students must be able to perceive how the workshop helped them change their writing. If students leave each workshop with a single new idea about how to revise their work, you will know that the workshop process has been successful.

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Sample Workshop Materials

In designing workshop materials, prepare questions that help generate facts and ideas students can use during discussion. Create questions that are open-ended and that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

I. Worksheet for Close Reading Response

Your name:
Writer's name:
Title of essay:

Complete the tasks below, and use your responses during your conversation with your partner.

1. Read the essay all the way through, and do not comment on it right away.
2. Describe what you found most interesting about the essay.
3. Describe what related to your experiences.
4. What you would like to know more about?
5. In your own words, state the writer's main idea.
6. In your own words, summarize the writer's analysis.
7. What does the writer describe thoroughly?
8. In your own words, state the writer's evaluation of his or her adjustment to college.
9. Suggest what the writer could do to improve the essay.

II. Revision Plan Worksheet

Your Name:

Classmate who read your essay:

Following the discussion with your partner, make a revision plan. Remember that you make the final decisions about how to change your writing, but also remember that your partner gave you some serious responses to your writing.

1. Describe revisions you are planning to make in stating your focus.
2. Describe revisions you are planning to make in developing your ideas, and state specifically where and how you are going to add information.
3. Describe revisions you are planning to make in evaluating your adjustment to college.

III. Workshop Assessment

Your Name:

1. What did you like best about the workshop?
2. What did you find least helpful during the workshop?
3. What did you learn during the workshop?
4. What suggestions do you have for improving the workshop?

Chapter 4

Writing and Study Skills Development

In many freshman seminars, the primary focus is upon the development or improvement of essential study skills. Such "study skills seminars" give students many strategies for improving study habits, one of which is the need to perform a task more than once—to "revise" their reading, studying, planning, and note-taking. Writing activities can be instrumental in developing effective study skills because of the way in which writing helps students create and assess study plans. In this chapter, we will consider writing activities that can help students design, implement, and assess their performance in such basic study skills as goal-setting and time-management, and we will consider ways to use a specific type of writing—writing in journals—to improve notetaking skills, skills in writing essay exams, and reading comprehension of college-level textbooks.

Journal Writing: A Place to Begin Observing and Planning

In order to develop effective study habits, first-year students must become aware of how they actually spend their discretionary time, including the time they allocate to studying. We can help students begin strengthening their study skills by asking them to record their activities in a journal and by giving them steps for reviewing and assessing their day's work. An "observation and evaluation journal" combines both objective and subjective writing for specific purposes and forces students to confront the realities of their behavior during study times. When they learn to assess and evaluate their behavior, they can then design individualized plans for improving their study skills, especially their time management and concentration. Such a journal may be the first step in learning to manage time, set goals, and assess personal strengths and weaknesses.

Journal Writing: Informal, Yet Structured

If you decide to ask students to keep a study journal, you will need to establish a few principles about journal writing. First of all, journals are not diaries, and they are not simply factual records of a day's events. Instead, they are reflective records which include both objective information as well as subjective reflection or analysis. Students will need to be reminded that they must go beyond simply listing what happened on a specific day in their journal to an exploration of the consequences of an event. They will also need from you additional specific directions for their journal assignments, so that they know what structure you expect.

Although journals can be structured, they should also be informal. In order to write freely about their experiences, students need to know that you will not grade their journal entries in the same way that you grade a formal, revised essay. Remember that journal entries are never revised; all journal entries are early drafts and, like all early drafts, will have errors and weaknesses in organization and development. When assessing journals, remember that the writing is exploratory and may represent a great deal of risk for the writer. Journal entries are by nature "first drafts" and therefore cannot be graded like revised essays. They can, however, be assessed and evaluated.

Like diaries, journals are personal; consequently, writers will have a strong sense of identity and control over their journals, and instructors must respect this. Respecting a writer's journal will influence the way in which you choose to respond to it as the teacher. Comment, if you like, but do not criticize or correct. Students will value your responses to their experiences and ideas, recognizing that a comment or response here and there in the journal demonstrates that you did indeed read and appreciate their effort and thought.

Responding to a journal is important, but grading it can be a major problem. Many freshman seminar instructors have asked the valid question: how and on what basis do you grade a journal? If you are not "counting" spelling and grammar errors, what should your approach be? In journal writing, elements other

"Provide a specific framework for students to record their day's work and to assess their performance so that they will focus the journal on an analysis and critique of personal study skills."

than spelling and grammar are most important in your evaluation. For instance, you can consider how much effort and thought the writer contributed to the task, and, in so doing, you are assessing development and organization—two very important elements in the writing process.

To be effective, journals must be kept regularly. Although this does not mean a journal entry must be made every day, it does mean that you have to direct students to write in their journals a specified number of times each week. Therefore, an important element to evaluate is the quantity of writing. Check to see that if you made four assignments, four have been completed. You can then assign a point or two for just completing the assignment. You can give additional points for quality of development, which, in the case of journal writing, is determined by how extensively and wisely writers describe and analyze their experiences.

You might choose to use in-class journals, allocating five to ten minutes at the beginning of a class period for writing. Beginning a class with a short period of writing also helps focus the students' attention on course content, gets them immediately involved in their learning process, and allows them to generate questions for discussions. The advantages of in-class journal writing are important. Because students are writing when you are present, you can assist with directions and give immediate responses. Secondly, writing in class will often relieve the students' feelings that journal writing is burdensome. A combination of in-class and out-of-class journal assignments can lead to the most effective use of journals.

Journal Assignments

Observing and Assessing Study Skills

To help students begin the process of assessing their own study skills, ask them to observe and record a single day's study activities in a journal. Stress that journals will not be graded for punctuation, grammar, and spelling, but will be reviewed and evaluated for their thoroughness, consistency, and actual effectiveness. Provide a specific framework for students to record their day's work and to assess their performance so that they will focus the journal on an analysis and critique of personal study skills. Following are sample directions for beginning a study skills journal.

Sample Directions for a Study Skills Journal.

As you write in your journal, keep your prose clear and concise. Record your day's work objectively, noting the facts of your day. At the end of each day, when you are reviewing and assessing the day's activities, feel free to write more expressively. Consider your day, and try to understand the choices you made about how to spend your time.

1. Begin your daily journal by stating your goals for that day. You may need to do this the evening before or early in the morning.

2. Take notes on how you spend your time throughout each day. Create an hourly chart in your journal, and for each hour, describe the way in which you used your time.

3. At the end of each day, assess the way in which you accomplished your goals for that day, and make a plan to improve the next day. For example, if you planned to review

your notes in the library following your biology lecture but got distracted by friends on your way to the library, note the distraction and make a plan for overcoming it the next time it occurs.

4. At the end of each week, review and describe the week's record, and assess your accomplishments and weaknesses. Write a paragraph summarizing the week's work, pinpointing important achievements and significant weaknesses.

5. Make a plan for the coming week. Write your goals for the week, then write goals each day. Begin the self-observation, recording, and assessing process again.

The Many Uses of Journal Writing

Journal writing is flexible and useful because it is informal, unrevised, and allows you to change your directions according to the study skills you are teaching. Many professional writers use their journals as a discovery notebook, and the directions that you provide for your students should help them focus the observational task and direct them to discover specific actions. Topics for which you can provide specific directions include these: monitoring grades, class participation, residence hall life, extracurricular activities, and use of free time.

Monitoring Grades

Students can use journals to monitor their grades by keeping their own grade records and by reviewing their grade standing regularly. This will provide a "reality check" on their performance. By looking at a concrete record of their grades, it is harder for students to deceive themselves about their progress and achievement. Another purpose for self-monitoring of grades is that it gives students some control over their progress and helps them develop responsibility for their achievements. These two factors—control and responsibility—can be nurtured through writing activities to help students turn the external motivation of grades into the internal motivation of learning. The following are sample directions for using journals to monitor grades.

Sample Directions for Monitoring Grades in Journals.

1. For each course that you are presently taking, make a record sheet on which to list your grades.

2. For each record sheet, design a chart with five columns on which to list these items:

   a. your assignments

   b. due dates

   c. your goals for that assignment

   d. grades received

   e. your assessment of how you met your goal.

3. Use this record sheet to keep track of your assignments, your progress, and the way in which you were able to meet your goals.

4. Every two or three weeks, review each record sheet, and assess your progress to date. Write a paragraph on a separate sheet of paper in your journal, assessing the way in which you are meeting your goals. Ask yourself these questions as you assess your work:

   a. How have I been successful?

"Journal writing is flexible and useful because it is informal, unrevised, and allows you to change your directions according to the study skills you are teaching."

"To develop internal motivation and discipline to study regularly, students need to know that they are in charge of setting and meeting their goals."

b. Where have I not achieved my goals?

c. What is getting in the way of my ability to meet my goals?

d. What changes can I make to improve my success?

Goal Setting and the "Pledge Journal"

A pledge journal can be an effective means of setting personal goals through a "pledge statement" and of measuring progress toward those goals. A pledge statement is simply a few sentences that students write in response to this question: What do I promise to do today? The promise that they make to themselves will help them organize their priorities for studying; and the knowledge that, in a day or two, they will assess their pledge in writing and orally heightens their commitment to fulfilling their promises.

Pledge statements should reflect topic areas that students are examining during a study skills course; and, as they gain an awareness of the many components that contribute to academic success, their pledge statements will become more complex. For example, at the beginning of a course, a student might only pledge, *"I promise to attend all my classes this week."* But after workshops on time management and study environment, a pledge might look like this: *"I promise to attend all classes this week, review my biology lecture notes in the library immediately after class, and study tonight in the study lounge with my study group."*

To develop internal motivation and discipline to study regularly, students need to know that they are in charge of setting and meeting their goals. Writing pledge statements that describe daily goals helps them take control of their studying behavior, monitor their weaknesses, and reward themselves for success.

Assessing pledge statements. Assessment is essential to growth, so it is important to set aside a few minutes in a study skills course to allow students to review their pledges privately and write a response to themselves about whether and how they were able to keep their promises. They should continue to use their journals to assess their pledges, writing a commentary on their behavior, revising their pledges, and making plans for the next day. These sample directions will prompt students to assess their pledges.

Sample Directions for Pledge Assessment

Review your pledge, and list ways in which you succeeded in meeting your pledge and ways in which you failed. Look at your list, and explore the reasons why you were sometimes successful and sometimes not successful. List any changes you need to make. Write a few sentences explaining how you can improve the way in which you can keep your promises to yourself.

Pledge Journals and Group Discussion

After private writing time, students can meet in small groups and discuss the plans they have made for the next day's pledge. They may or may not choose to exchange journal writing or to discuss specific details of their writing, but they can share new strategies for success. Small group discussion should lead to brainstorming about successful pledges, and the instructor can ask for these ideas from the whole group.

Focusing on Time Management

When students write about the differences between their high school and college lives, they will certainly describe the changes in the availability of time to accomplish their work and meet their personal needs. It's not unusual for students to become overwhelmed with their new freedom and completely misuse their time, or to become so dedicated to their studies that they do not allow themselves time for recreation, relaxation, and exercise—essential components of academic success. In between these two extremes are students who are not entirely satisfied with their use of time. All students can benefit from objectively identifying their time needs, making clear plans for ways to use their time, and reviewing their behavior through writing and reflection. This process of listing, identifying, planning, reviewing, and assessing in writing incorporates critical thinking skills on a personal level.

Most students have trouble accepting the need to keep term, weekly, and daily calendars, but the most successful students write, review, and monitor their schedules rigorously. Again, students can use their journals for this process, but they will, of course, need to have standard book calendars to record appointments and other regular obligations.

Time Management Journal Assignments

To focus on time management issues through journal writing, give assignments that follow the process of listing, identifying, planning, reviewing, and assessing.

Sample Time Management Journal Assignment

1. Describe your present use of time. When do you feel that you lack adequate time to complete tasks? What strategies do you presently have to using your time wisely?

2. On a chart for each day of the week, list all the regular requirements you have during each day, including classes, work, and practice for sports or music.

3. Describe other needs that you have during each day, such as meals, sleep, recreation, relaxation, and exercise. Identify how much time you need for each activity, and record it on the chart.

4. Describe the courses you are presently taking and the amount of time you need to study for each one. Write these times on your chart. Try to arrange study hours around classes, and avoid scheduling your heaviest study times very late at night.

5. List other activities related to studying, such as labs and tutoring, and write these on your chart.

6. Review your chart before going any further. Assess the amount of time you have allocated to studying, relaxing, and working. Have you identified sufficient study time? Have you allocated too much relaxation time?

7. Follow your chart each day, and at the end of each day, write a few sentences describing your success in following your time management plan. Identify changes you need to make for the next day.

" All students can benefit from objectively identifying their time needs, making clear plans for ways to use their time, and reviewing their behavior through writing and reflection."

Exploring Study Environments

Another way in which students sabotage their time management plans is by choosing the wrong

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study environment. Writing about an ideal study environment, assessing their present study environment, and designing a plan to improve their present environment can help students make changes.

Imaginative Writing: The Ideal Study Room

Imaginative writing can help students uncover their needs and plan effective strategies for improving their study habits. After reviewing factors that contribute to creating a good study environment—lighting, heat, quiet, lack of distraction, moderate level of comfort, isolation, furniture, temperature, and possibility of short breaks with food or company—ask students to write an essay describing their favorite place to be. They might choose a favorite beach, woods, room, or fishing spot; but, in all cases, they should focus on identifying the general features about the place that they like as well as specific details.

Following this writing activity, ask students to exchange writing in small groups, and then report to the class at large, identifying the features that create positive environments. Ask students, *"What do these features have in common with the optimum features in study environments?"* You will find that they can identify those features that are similar to both kinds of places as well as features that are irrelevant in designing a good study environment.

Next, ask students to describe their present study environment, focusing on general features and specific details. Ask them to assess this environment, noting its strengths and weaknesses. Follow this assessment activity by asking the students to write an essay describing their ideal study environment, and stress that this is "creative" writing—they are to describe their ideal, even if it seems impossible. They can exchange these imaginative essays in small groups and discuss those features from the ideal that *can* be transferred to designing their real study environment. Finally, ask students to list changes they can make in their present study environments that help bring it closer to their ideal.

The sample below shows how one student used a description of his favorite vacation spot as a starting point to assess his present study environment and plan changes.

Study Environment

Chris Gerencher

My favorite place is Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. I love going there. I especially like watching the sun rise. Usually I do this by myself, but every now and then my brother will join me. Myrtle Beach is normally crowded, but I usually stay away from the beach during mid-afternoon because I get burned too easily. The thing I like about being there the most is freedom—freedom to do as I please, when I please, and how I please.

My present study environment gives me freedom, but right now it is too cluttered to be useful. I have papers, clothing, books, speakers, and CDs scattered everywhere. I am too unorganized. I am amazed that I found my notebook or pen. Even though my room is a mess, my desk and chair are clear so when I study I am free from the rest of the teenage wasteland.

When I study I find dim light the easiest to study by. If the light is too bright I get a headache and decide to quit early. Without some type of noise I would probably go crazy, so I play soft music because it is relaxing. I try to take my shoes off when I study and not wear tight jeans. Above all, I need to be comfortable. I have a chair in my room that is so comfortable it is easy to sleep in, but I try not to. To my side I need a can of Sprite. Finally about every forty minutes I find someone to joke with for awhile, then it's back to studying. To get to this point, though, my room needs some serious spring cleaning.

Textbook Reading and the Response Journal

A response journal encourages students to keep written records of their understanding and questions about their reading assignments. In a response journal, students record their reading process, identifying and commenting on passages that are clear and listing questions about passages that are not. This kind of writing helps them take charge of their reading process, focus on what they do understand, and identify questions for instructors or tutors about difficult material. In a study skills course, you might ask students to keep a response journal for a text that is particularly difficult. They can also be encouraged to show these journals to the course instructor during individual conferences so that the instructor can identify the ways in which the text is difficult for a student.

Dr. Sally Lipsky, a reading and study skills specialist in the Learning Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, explains the connections between reading and writing development by focusing on how combining the two activities builds confidence:

Effective reading and writing are all about the same things: gaining confidence and making connections. Working on writing and reading simultaneously makes students more comfortable with language, and in particular, to the receiving process involved in reading. When students come back into a reading class after working on a journal entry in the writing center, I notice that their confidence as readers has improved. When they write and express their own ideas, they have to make connections for another reader. They can then bring that process of making connections to their own reading tasks. In writing, they have to "put it all together" for first themselves, and then for another reader. I want them to be able to step back from their writing and say, "What did I just create here?" Then, when they are reading, they can ask, "What was this writer trying to create for me?" After working on specific writing tasks to describe or evaluate, for example, or use details or fully explain an idea, they are better able to find these features as they read. By learning to make connections as a writer, they learn to find connections as a reader. (personal communication, June, 1992)

Reading college-level texts presents problems for students because the writing style is often denser than they are accustomed to. Consequently, students are challenged to find a new way to read complex material to find, as Sally Lipsky explains above, what the writer was trying to create. Students need new strategies for finding what the writer was trying to create. Tasks such as untangling material in texts, identifying crucial ideas, noting important details, summarizing material in their own words, and reviewing and checking their understanding can all be assisted through the writing process. Writing in a response journal can help them through these complicated cognitive activities.

"Reading college-level texts presents problems for students because the writing style is often denser than they are accustomed to."

Using a Response Journal

Directions for a response journal should follow the reading process that students have to use when reading a textbook: identifying crucial ideas, noting important details, summarizing material in their own words, and reviewing and checking their understanding. The directions below take students through a recursive reading and writing process with text material and asks them to reexamine ideas and facts by posing their own questions. Finally, they are prompted to assimilate the

"Students can create a reader's log for their lecture notes in much the same way that they do for text notes."

material from their own perspective. This process can be integrated with standard strategies for text reading that emphasize questioning and multiple readings, such as predicting information from titles and headings, identifying key words, restricted highlighting, and creating questions in response to headings.

Sample Directions for Creating a Response Journal

In your response journal, you will be keeping a reader's log that helps you identify material you do understand and material that creates questions for you. The reader's log is based on the premise that you can break up reading a large unit, such as a chapter, into smaller sections which you can explore in depth to increase your understanding.

1. Read your text material through once, noting major divisions identified through headings and subheadings. Write a few sentences stating the main purpose of the material as you understand it after one reading. List questions you have about the material.

2. Read the material again, and this time, start your reader's log in your journal. Take a break after each major section, and write the main idea in your log. In another column, write questions you have about that section.

3. Review your questions from the log. Read the complete text material again, using your questions as a guide. As you read, try to find the answers to your questions; write these in your log.

4. Write a summary in your own words of the important ideas from the reading.

5. Explain in a few sentences how the main ideas are important to the general subject of the text.

Lecture Note-Taking and the Response Journal

Students can create a reader's log for their lecture notes in much the same way that they do for text notes. In this case, however, *they* are creating the reading material for their own review and comment. A reader's log for lecture notes can be used in conjunction with a standard approach to note-taking, such as the Cornell method, (Pauk, 1974) that is already recursive and encourages students to develop questions and answers on their own, summarize sections, and explain the relevance of sectional material to the larger subject matter. The following directions illustrate this point.

Sample Directions for Creating a Lecture Notes Reading Log

1. Review your lecture notes and the questions you have written in the left-hand column. Choose the most puzzling questions, and rewrite them into your reader's log.

2. Identify key words from your questions that you do understand. Identify new words that confuse you. Find definitions of the new words from the text or from a dictionary.

3. Look for connections between these two groups of words. Explore possible connections in your log, writing about the elements the words share.

4. List possible sources (such as other books in the course, using the library, seeing your instructor, or visiting the tutorial center) to assist

you in finding answers to your questions. Develop strategies to use these sources.

Using Reader's Logs and Journals to Prepare for Essay Exams

If students have been creating reader's logs and journal entries throughout a course term in response to textbook material and lecture notes, they are well prepared to study for exams. The material they have created will help them focus their studying and review important concepts as well as consider new possibilities for exam topics.

When students take essay exams, they usually do not have the opportunity to make revisions before submitting the exam for a grade. Consequently, writing an essay exam presents a major problem for inexperienced writers: they must submit an early draft as though it were a final draft. In order to write essay exams successfully, students must "rehearse" and practice their essays before actually taking the exam. Most inexperienced writers do not rehearse their writing—for example, by writing it mentally or composing aloud to oneself, or just thinking about the subject for days—before they begin composing. Therefore, to become well-prepared for an essay exam, students must learn to rehearse writing on the spot, to plan and compose quickly, and to proofread expeditiously. Students can use their logs and journals to identify possible essay topics for an exam and then practice writing these essays so that they are well-rehearsed before the day of the test.

Practicing Essay Exams

Give students an opportunity in class to practice writing essay tests. Plan a preliminary small-group workshop during which students work together, looking through their logs and journals to identify possible essay topics. Ask them to choose two topics with which to practice.

For a second workshop, create a simulated essay test-taking situation, but shorten it so that students discover how much and how well they can actually write in a given amount of time. Ask students to prepare these two topics for an essay test. Ask them to bring basic outlines to class or plans that include main ideas and important supporting details. For this second writing workshop, ask students to review their plans and then put them away. Then give them a short time to write, asking them to write as much of the essay as they can. For example, ask students to write for ten minutes and then stop. Encourage them to use their free-writing skills, but to monitor their writing as they go, noting errors they have made that they can recheck later. At the end of the ten minutes, give them one minute to correct errors or add information. Finally, ask students to assess their writing: Was it clear and to the point? Did they include the most important information? How much more do they need to be able to write in a longer time period in order to write a strong essay exam? Suggest that students rehearse the essay test again on their own, writing for a longer time period.

Conclusion

Writing should be an essential component of a freshman seminar course because it gives students a way to focus attention on important ideas and details. Writing can play an instrumental role in helping students determine their plans and use them successfully.

When students commit their thoughts to writing and then reread what they have created, they gain an opportunity to reflect and to reconsider their lives. Journal writing, with its informality and flexibility, offers tremendous possibilities for enhancing learning and changing behavior. Because it is more "open" than traditional essays, students are more likely to feel comfortable taking risks as they write in both expression and thought. And, as students take risks, they make unexpected discoveries that determine their future paths. These two elements—discovery and determination—help students plan successful academic lives.

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Chapter Five

Writing and the Individual Needs of First-Year Students

Depending upon their overall purpose and structure, freshman seminar courses will differ with respect to the way in which writing is integrated into other course activities. Recent research conducted at the University of South Carolina (Barefoot, 1992) indicates that a small number of freshman seminars are structurally linked with English composition. Others, which are administered through a variety of campus units and departments, include an intensive focus on writing. Still others include writing as one of a number of important academic skills which comprise seminar content.

Whenever freshman seminar students are assigned an out-of-class writing project, it is important to implement writing conferences—whether with the teacher or with a tutor—to talk with students about the particular project in early and middle draft stages. As Muriel Harris (1986) explains in her book, *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference*, "It is in the one-to-one setting of a conference that we can meet with writers and hear them talk about their writing. And they can also hear us talk, not about writing in the abstract, but about *their* writing" (p. 3). Because all students can benefit from individualized conferences, we will look at some basic guidelines for creating useful conversations about writing during the drafting process. Also in this chapter, we will consider the important role of recognizing and teaching a group of students with very special needs—students who have learning disabilities.

Guidelines for Writing Conferences

When you invite students to your office for a conference about their writing, some will be intimidated and apprehensive. Be prepared to accommodate their apprehension by initiating a friendly conversation and allowing them to set the agenda for the meeting. Giving students the opportunity to tell you what they would like to talk about in regard to their writing gives them enough control over the conference to alleviate their fear that you will "rip their essay apart" when they are alone with you in your office. You will find that it is still possible to introduce your own concerns into their agenda if you are patient and attentive, and most often, you will find that their concerns closely match yours.

Even if you are not a writing expert, you can initiate a useful conference with your students, and how you begin the conference will influence the way the conference will proceed. Begin by just being friendly: standard greeting questions are appropriate and will help students relax and feel that they can trust you. General questions such as, *"How's your writing going?" "What are you finding as you work on that assignment?"* or *"What would you like to talk about in your writing?"* are sufficiently open-ended to allow the student to zero in on his or her own writing process and problems, but also to point out to you what is going well.

Make the student comfortable in your environment by providing a chair and accessible writing surface. Avoid sitting behind your desk and using your desk as a barrier between yourself and the student; the student will immediately sense this "hierarchical" arrangement and defer to you as an authority or resist you for the same reason. Instead of using your desk to establish your authority, sit next to or across from the student, on the same level—both of you in chairs or student desks, or ideally, around a small table with the writing between the two of you.

In general, students will leave a conference with more ideas about improving their writing if you first focus on the "big picture" of the writing: the thesis or main idea, as well as the development, organization, and voice. If you are looking at an early draft, it is not helpful to discuss clarity because many errors will be corrected in subsequent drafts; if you do notice many errors, just say, *"Remember to save time for careful proofreading and editing before you hand in your final copy."* Wait until the very latest draft stages to discuss errors so that you can be sure the writer had a chance to make corrections on his or her own.

Think of the conference as an opportunity to explore with the writer ways to improve a piece of writing. As you discuss the writ-

"As you discuss the writing, your most effective role will that of a 'prompter' who asks the right questions to help the writer discover her own ways of proceeding to the next draft."

ing, your most effective role will that of a "prompter" who asks the right questions to help the writer discover her own ways of proceeding to the next draft.

Begin by asking the student to read his or her work aloud to you. As your students read to you, they may be hearing their own words for the very first time. A student will probably stop every now and then, noting aloud, *"Wait, that's not what I wanted to say here."* Thus, the oral process immediately begins the important revising process for the writer.

As you listen, do not interrupt the writer, but allow her to discover her own reading voice. If she has not done any self-correcting as she reads, and you feel that there were moments that she should have, you can ask her to go back over those passages that were unclear. As you ask for clarification, frame your questions as a true reader who is responding to any piece of writing. If you're having an interesting and productive conversation about the writing, students may forget that they are actually discovering new things to add to the writing.

Generally, a writing conference need last only fifteen to twenty minutes; and, after half an hour, most students become too tired of intense scrutiny of language to be enthusiastic. Help students gain closure on a conference by asking them to summarize and review your discussion. You can end a conference by saying, *"I think you've gained some new ideas now. Why don't you repeat them to me so we can be sure there isn't anything else that's important right now to discuss?"* This question also helps you and your student continue to look towards the next stage of the writing process and identify areas that will need more attention.

Using a Campus Writing Center

College or university writing centers, where professional or paraprofessional tutors meet individually with writers, provide an opportunity for students to explore ideas and styles of expression, to take risks, and to receive non-threatening feedback from professional staff and peers. With intensive individualized attention to composing, a great deal of growth in writing can occur.

In the past, writing centers have been perceived as places where only remedial students must go to improve their basic writing skills. This is no longer the case; most writing centers are now learning environments for all students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. There may be computer labs attached to tutorial services, and there may be specialized tutorial programs for first-year students.

Students do, however, remain sensitive to hearing their instructors say, *"You need to go to the writing center."* They may perceive such a request as punishment or as an indication that they are stupid. The way in which you frame such a recommendation influences the student's perception of tutoring in writing. There are many positive ways to recommend to a student that tutoring would be beneficial, but all recommendations should include the idea that all writers benefit from responses to their work. Avoid prejudicial or stigmatizing language that discourages students from getting the help that they need. Instructors who write in large letters in red ink on the top of the first page of a student's essay, *"YOU*

OBVIOUSLY CAN'T USE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROPERLY," are communicating more than just the idea that the writing contains many errors: they are insulting the person's identity as a communicator.

Working with a Writing Center

Writing centers can supplement your instruction, not replace or supersede it. Effective use of the writing center requires that you communicate to students your expectations for tutorial outcomes. It is appropriate to tell a student, *"When you go to the writing center, tell the tutor, 'I would like to look at specific ways to expand my development.'"* Such specific directions help students practice college-level vocabulary in a particular context as they gain control of their learning.

Most writing centers will provide feedback forms to instructors following conferences. However, the Buckley Amendment gives students the right to privacy about their academic records. Hopefully, your students will be eager for you to know that they received tutorial help because they will know that you value it and will reward them for their efforts. Tutoring is usually its own reward: conferences will lead to improvements in writing *if* a student follows up on revision plans. Additionally, you may choose to build into your grading schemes points for writing center conferences that are awarded after you have seen feedback forms that reveal the substance of the conference.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Instructors working with students with learning disabilities need a basic understanding of what a learning disability is, how it may affect an individual's learning style, and what general teaching strategies are usually helpful. Extensive specialization in learning disabilities is not necessary. Most important is the recognition that writers with learning disabilities need what all writers need: a supportive place to work, individualized response to ideas and expression, and conversations that boost self-image and confidence. Writers with learning disabilities will need a great deal of encouragement and response to help maintain their motivation, especially during times when they feel discouraged or overwhelmed.

Defining Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are not clearly understood in many cases, but we do know that they appear to be the result of neurophysiological dysfunction. Sometimes, a student has a clear diagnosis of a learning disability and will know, for example, that she has dyslexia, a problem with reading, or that he has an auditory deficit, meaning that he cannot always accurately interpret what he hears. But in many cases, the diagnosis is not definitive. We do know what learning disabilities are not: they are not forms of mental retardation or other mental handicaps; they are not a form of mental illness; they are not the result of an emotional disorder; and they are not the result of cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Problems with writing that students with learning disabilities experience may look similar to the writing behavior of students who have academically weak backgrounds, but the source of the struggles is very different. Also, the pedagogies for providing individual assistance vary considerably.

"Writers with learning disabilities will need a great deal of encouragement and response to help maintain their motivation, especially during times when they feel discouraged or overwhelmed."

"Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 describes legislation which is crucial to educational rights for people with learning disabilities."

Legal Definitions and Student Rights

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 describes legislation which is crucial to educational rights for people with learning disabilities. The intent of this Act is that persons with learning disabilities must be provided with an education that is like and equal to that received by persons without learning disabilities. There are some significant consequences of this Act for learning disabled students who are working on a writing project.

Educators need to recognize that students with diagnosed learning disabilities must be allowed to use the appropriate accommodations recommended for their particular profile. For example, if it is recommended that a student have a note-taker with them during class, the student *must*, by federal law, be allowed to use such forms of learning. Other consequences of this Act include allowing students with learning disabilities alternative forms of testing, untimed testing or essay writing, use of computers for word-processing and transcriptions.

Diagnosis: Identifiable Characteristics

Students with learning disabilities may demonstrate some of the characteristics listed below. However, each person has a unique learning style. Therefore, it's quite likely that a person with dyslexia, for example, characterized commonly by reading and writing problems–words are confused or misinterpreted or not processed at all–may be able to read some kinds of texts more easily than others and will certainly be able to understand a text when someone reads it aloud. In sum, it is important to recognize that a learning disability is a legitimate problem for a writer and that it is mandatory to provide the required assistance. But at the same time, it is important not to prejudge a person's competence as a writer or to hold low expectations for how that person can make progress in writing.

Common Characteristics of College Students with Learning Disabilities

I. Reading

—Confusion of similar words, difficulty using phonics, problems reading words with several syllables.

—Slow reading rate and/or difficulty adjusting speed to the nature of the reading task.

—Difficulty with comprehension and retention of material that is read, but not with material presented orally.

II. Writing

—Difficulty with sentence structure, poor grammar, omitted words.

—Frequent spelling errors, inconsistent spelling, letter reversals.

—Difficulty copying from board or overhead.

—Poorly formed letters, difficulty with spacing, capitals, and punctuation.

III. Oral Language

—Difficulty attending to spoken language and inconsistent concentration.

—Difficulty expressing ideas orally which the student seems to understand.

—Problems describing events or stories; improper sequence.

—Residual problems with grammar, difficulty with inflectional or derivational endings.

IV. Study Skills

—Poor organization and time management.

—Difficulty following directions.

—Poor organization of notes and other written materials.

—Need more time to complete assignments.

V. Social Skills

—Difficulty "reading" facial expressions and body language.

—Problems interpreting subtle messages such as sarcasm.

—Confusion in spatial organization, getting lost easily, difficulty following directions.

—Disorientation in time, difficulty telling time. (Wren, C., & Segal, L., 1985)

Although it is helpful to be familiar with this list of characteristics, remember that students with learning disabilities should never be prejudged regarding their abilities to learn and develop new skills. A teacher's or tutor's expectations for progress can affect the student's confidence and ability to learn. High expectations coupled with the communication of confidence and trust will result in more successful learning.

First-Year Students with Learning Disabilities

Cathy Dugan, Director of the Advising and Test Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, states,

During the freshman year, learning disabled students need more directive assistance than other students. It's important to keep in touch with their advisors and instructors and to be flexible in your approach to instruction. I can never exactly predict how a student will handle the challenges presented during the freshman year. I have found that self-esteem is an important variable in a student's success, as well as their previous experiences in school with the label learning disabled. In the best situations, learning disabled students have learned how to use that label to their advantage: they know how to describe their disabilities and how to request accommodations. It's much tougher for freshman students who have just discovered that they have a disability and are just learning to talk about it with friends, parents, and professors. (personal communication, June, 1992)

Because students with learning disabilities are "at different places" in requesting assistance and understanding their disabilities, it is critical that instructors respond to them individually. Ideally, instructors should receive information from an office of disabled student services about a particular student's disability, along with suggested strategies for assisting the student. However, this ideal may not always conform to reality. You may find yourself wondering if a student has a learning disability and how to proceed in providing assistance. If you notice a student demonstrating characteristics of a learning disability, call the campus office of disabled student services and seek advice.

"Ideally, instructors should receive information from an office of disabled student services about a particular student's disability, along with suggested strategies for assisting the student."

All those working with first-year students who have learning disabilities will be most successful when these conditions hold:

1. The student has identified his or her disability to you.

2. The student has familial support for his or her efforts and has a strong advising component from the university or school, including appropriate interventions and assistance such as readers, books on tape, untimed exams, and access to computers.

3. The student has strong internal motivation and self-discipline.

4. The student has strong skills in time management and is able to structure his or her studying efforts effectively.

Conversely, when students are weak in any of the above areas, instructors and tutors will find their work more demanding and even frustrating. They will have to be prepared to integrate assistance in these areas:

1. Providing guidelines for time management (personal and study time as well as work time).

2. Structuring a learning system for the individual and making a plan for working through the writing process.

3. Helping the student create networks of support in the academic institution or at home.

4. Providing motivation and inspiration through personal modeling and interactions.

5. Functioning as a reader and identifying computer accessibility.

Directive Assistance for First-Year Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities benefit greatly from the individualized assistance available from peer tutors in writing centers. Peer tutors can provide essential role-modeling and encouragement for any underconfident writer. For LD students, tutors provide an extra support system. In the following essay, an LD student explains the kind of help she hopes to receive from tutors. Her remarks are also helpful for instructors who wish to support LD students in their journey toward academic success.

The LD Student in the Writing Center

by Emily Moran

I need tutors to understand where I'm coming from. Tutors have to put themselves into my place or picture and know that my dyslexia doesn't affect me just when I walk into the writing center; it affects me all the time.

A tutor needs to understand that a student with a learning disability depends upon a lot of people and things to go correctly. When one thing goes wrong or breaks down, it can ruin your day. Tutors can help students with learning disabilities by helping them stay on task instead of getting distracted by their worries. Don't sit in the middle of the writing center because it's too easy to be distracted. I always go to the corners.

I hope that tutors won't give me negative feedback—there's enough of that to deal with—but will give praise. If someone says to me "That's a nice sentence," I think, "Whew, I did one right thing today." Somedays I don't feel much like "she's special." I think that people think when they see me working in the writing center, that we're just working on a paper like anybody else, and that's really nice. The freshman is totally unable to conceive that they could do this. They just need total reassurance. It's hard for a freshman to get to the point where they can concentrate because of their fear and major adjustments they're facing. Sometimes I think people aren't going to believe me about my dyslexia.

Probably the most challenging aspect of teaching writing to students with learning disabilities is the question of when to be directive and when to encourage self-reliance. It is not easy to know when to offer directive instruction and when to withhold it. The pedagogical approach— "accommodation, not remediation"—can be a useful guide, but even this approach is controversial. A student-centered approach, on which this discussion of writing instruction is based, may not meet the needs of students with learning disabilities. While we should be committed to a pedagogy of helping students grow as authorities over their own work, it may be necessary to be more instructive than usual, overtly identifying errors or organizational problems that a learning disabled student may not be able to see. But finally, since it is impossible to know whether and to what degree a student can overcome a disability, instructors should avoid negative stereotyping and predictions and simply let the students themselves show what they can do.

Conclusion

Even the very best writers benefit from receiving responses to their writing from interested readers. As the instructor, you are certainly an interested reader, but students will always perceive you as prejudiced because you evaluate and grade the writing, making it part of a student's record. Students are always aware of the hierarchical dimensions of their relationships with their instructors; therefore, they are always going to feel uncomfortable in letting you read their early drafts and hearing your feedback. During individual conferences, your first priority will be to put your students at ease so that they will be able to listen productively to you. Your second priority will be to have a good conversation about the ideas in the writing. And finally, it will be important for you to make your recommendations for a subsequent draft in terms of your needs as a reader. The language that you use to describe your responses to the draft affects the student's reception of your feedback. If you say *"I couldn't follow your ideas in the second paragraph,"* or *"I couldn't pick up your main point,"* instead of *"Your writing is disorganized,"* or *"You don't have a focus,"* your students will not respond defensively and will understand what they need to do to write more effectively. This "language of response" rather than criticism gives students a chance to participate in college-level discourse. Opportunities to interact privately with instructors and tutors promote growth in language use and contribute to the holistic adjustment to college life.

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Chapter Six

Diversity in Language and Writing

In this chapter we will consider the relationship between variations in spoken English and writing instruction. Besides exploring how regional dialects and slang affect developing writing skills, we will look at some ideas for helping writers for whom English is not a first language. These students may be international students, or they may be American citizens for whom English never became the dominant language in speech, reading, or writing. Both groups of students need some unique assistance in gaining English writing skills. They also require from us extra sensitivity to the ways in which language use reflects and affects ethnic identities.

What Do We Mean by Diversity in Language?

Mankind apparently views all unfamiliar human behavior as suspicious and unsystematic. If you have ever watched a bird build a nest on a window sill or in a bush within the range of any passing alley cat, you have probably not questioned the intelligence of the bird. Most people accept even apparently erratic animal behavior and assume that, no matter how foolish the act may seem, it probably makes sense to the animal. But as soon as a human being is seen to behave "differently," he is frequently considered foolish or uncooperative. Language, in this case a dialect, is also a form of behavior. That people speak different dialects in no way stems from their intelligence or judgment. They speak the dialect that enables them to get along with the other members of their social and geographical group. (Shuy, R., 1981)

If we are committed to encouraging and developing diversity at our educational institutions in ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, age, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds, then we must be committed to nurturing the diversity in language that results from these same backgrounds. Language is a delight because of its rich variety, and each person who begins college comes with a variety of stylistic repertoires in both speech and writing. Accepting and valuing diversity in speaking and writing styles is not simple, however. We must find a way to balance our commitment to valuing diversity with our commitment to helping students use Standard Written English correctly.

Slang and Dialect

Because each person has a "social and geographical group," each person also has a dialect. Regional dialects bring variety, innovation, and liveliness to American English, but dialects also can lead to confusion and prejudice. In the college classroom, instructors generally expect students to use and endorse a standard form of English, and deviation from this standard can result in stereotyped judgments about a student's literacy level, intelligence, ability to learn, and attitude toward education.

Because some dialects vary more greatly than others from the standard form for written English—what some scholars call Standard Written English (SWE)—writing "correctly" in college may present additional challenges for students whose dialect is "far away" from written conventions.

Other factors that hold students back from writing correctly include minimal reading experience and inexperience with "switching styles"; we all "switch styles" when we choose, for example, to use a more formal speaking style rather than a regional dialect because we understand that the purpose and environment of the conversation require it. Some students may begin college with backgrounds that did not expose them to many occasions requiring such "switching." Valuing the varieties of English complicates teaching writing, but we need to be sensitive to students' personal language backgrounds if we want to send the strongest messages that we believe in their abilities to succeed.

The Speaking/Writing Relationship

We know that there is a relationship between speaking and writing, but capitalizing on that relationship to improve writing and, at the same time, explain the

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differences between the two styles to help students write correctly, seems impossible. On the complexities of the speaking-writing relationship, Bennett Rafoth (1993) explains that "If writing were simply speech written down, learning to write would be almost as natural and effortless as learning to talk." Rafoth explains that writing and reading rest on what we call the *print code*, and that there is, therefore, a key difference between speaking and writing. For example, readers "rely on visual cues like spacing and punctuation to help them move across lines and down the page," and print cues "have a rough correspondence to vocal features we rely on for speaking and listening, like pausing and falling intonation."

Even organization and appearance are tied to the print code: placing topic sentences at beginnings of paragraphs is a "convention of the print code which assists readers, who, unlike listeners, have no opportunity to ask for clarifications." Rafoth (1993) also identifies similarities between speech and the print code. He notes that "composition specialists agree that good writing has many oral qualities," such as voice and rhythm—features that are essential to clear and effective prose. The way in which we "hear" writing as we read and use our familiarity with oral language helps us to understand what we read. Furthermore, both speech and writing make extensive use of context and purpose: speakers and writers alter their sense of what to say according to the situation.

The similarities and differences between speech and writing complicate the ways in which we can talk about spoken language varieties that students use in their writing. It is very difficult to move students away from "writing like they speak" without infringing on their "right to their own language" because discussing an individual language style—a style that is a result of personal, cultural, and ethnic environment and thus very much a part of the person's identity—will inevitably lead to offending the person.

When you feel that you need to address the use of "slang" or dialect in a student's writing, focus on the differences between informal speech styles and formal written conventions, without suggesting that the student writes incorrectly because he or she has a "language deficiency." Remind students that everyone has different styles for speech and writing and that when we write, we have to edit for inappropriate or ineffective use of informal speech styles.

Reinforce Conversation as a Technique for Gathering Ideas

While you are trying to teach students to produce correct writing that is different from their speech, you also should continue to promote their natural abilities as conversationalists. Continue to encourage small-group discussions as a way of brainstorming in the beginning of a writing task. Allow students to feel free to be themselves in your classroom so that they use their own language styles comfortably; the freedom and trust that develop in the classroom will influence the way in which they write—when students feel welcomed and valued during class discussions, they are more likely to write openly, fully, and clearly. And they will not speak openly unless they know that "their" language is accepted and appreciated because of its unique features.

To reinforce the value of language varieties, encourage students to use their dialects in writing as direct quotations, illustrating how they think aloud and how they talk with their friends and family. Asking them to write about their dialects or slang will force the issue to the forefront; as they capture speech in writing and use quotation marks around it, they'll notice the differences themselves.

Group Activities for Discussing Language Varieties

If you are planning units in your course that consider issues of diversity, you can integrate language-based projects that tie into the general topics about diversity. The activities below encourage students to recognize and appreciate language differences.

1. The Same Letter, Written Twice: My First Two Weeks at College

Ask students to discuss how we all make choices about language use depending upon the context in which we are speaking or writing. Students benefit from group activities that heighten their awareness of the distinction between slang and formal language. For example, ask students to write a letter to two different audiences describing their first weeks at college. They will readily discuss choices in style and content. When writing to a peer, students will use slang and describe social activities honestly and openly. When they are writing to a parent, they will be more careful in using slang and in offering details about activities because they will not want to offend, disturb, frighten, or anger a parent. Because they know why they use slang with friends or only in certain environments, and why they use more formal expressions and styles when they find themselves with authorities or with people they do not know well, they will readily grasp the concept that when they write academic essays, they should use slang judiciously, if at all.

2. Introductions: Meet Your Classmates

Another way in which to foster discussion of diversity in language and background is to ask students to interview each other and then introduce one another to the class, in both speech and writing. This project brings differences out to the class as a whole, allows students to talk comfortably in small groups where they may feel less anxious about their language differences, and demonstrates differences between informal (small group), formal (class presentations), and written language styles. Students will naturally use these different styles without any advice from you; you may want to provide a follow-up discussion that asks students to identify those differences they noted as people spoke and wrote.

Tell students that they will work in small groups to conduct interviews of one another; then they will each present one brief—three minutes at most—spoken presentation about a partner from their group. Following their presentation, they are responsible for writing a paragraph that introduces their partner as part of a journal task. You might even choose to collect the written interviews and "publish" them for the class as a whole to read again to familiarize themselves with their classmates.

Begin by assigning small groups randomly, asking students to "count off" by fours, for example, and then work in these numerical

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groups to interview each other and prepare short presentations. By working in small groups rather than pairs, first-year students can create thorough interviews and presentations. Ask students to work in their groups to design a list of questions for the interviews. Assign group roles of time-keeper (this person monitors the interviews, noting for the others when the allotted time for each interview has passed), and facilitator (this person calls a halt to the interviewing process and asks the others to review their notes on the interviews, asking additional questions, if needed).

Each group member should be assigned to introduce one other group member to the whole class in a spoken presentation and in a journal paragraph. Each person should understand that he or she must take notes when interviewing the partner. When the class is ready to begin the interviewing process, tell students that each person in a group takes a turn being interviewed, with all other group members participating and asking questions. Encourage students to have "open" conversation as it develops during interviews so that they have an opportunity to learn about their similarities and differences.

3. *Identify Dialect Differences*

Ask students to identify words, expressions, or styles of speech that they recognize as different from their own. For example, there are dialect differences for large sandwiches on long rolls (hoagies, grinders, subs, Italians) and for carbonated beverages (soda, pop, tonic) that most groups of students can identify. As students name these words, point out that the differences are regional and, therefore, are part of a person's dialect. For a follow-up activity, ask students to search for more words that are part of a dialect by talking with people in their residence halls who are from a different section of the country than their own. In Pennsylvania, the eastern and western dialects are different enough that students quickly learn to identify where someone is from according to whether they say "soda" or "pop," or "rubber band" or "gum band," "paper sack" or "paper bag," to name just a few. They also notice pronunciation differences in the word "water" depending upon whether someone is from Philadelphia or Pittsburgh.

4. *List Slang*

Students have a great deal of fun talking about slang, especially in class, because they are convinced that such language is taboo in the classroom and that merely uttering these words in front of an instructor is breaking rules of school behavior. This idea in itself is worth discussing; indeed, you can expect that some student will say, *"It feels funny saying these words here."* In this activity, ask students to list slang terms they used in their high schools, jobs, or neighborhoods. Again, it may be best to begin this project in small groups because students will feel more comfortable using these words in a classroom among only a few peers. Ask for a volunteer from each group to identify slang words listed by his or her group. Put these words on the board; you will immediately notice that there are many terms with which you are unfamiliar! Be sure to ask students to define the words that you don't know; your ignorance helps make the important point about slang that it is generational, largely developed by young people, passed around by them within their peer groups, and that it fades fast.

What was "cool" in the fifties or sixties, isn't "cool" in the nineties.

Dialect and Written Errors

If you find that your students write with many errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, you may feel overwhelmed by the task of "correcting" their papers. People make errors in writing for many reasons, and usually, it's impossible to determine whether errors come from a lack of experience in writing, an absence of proofreading, poor reading in general, or from a lack of understanding that written English does differ from spoken English. The simplest diagnosis for you to make, and one that helps you avoid stigmatizing or appearing prejudiced, is to assume that no one has ever taught these students how to proofread.

When you are working with first-year students, you can expect that they will submit final drafts that do not look as though they have been proofread at all—and you may wonder if your students know English at all—but it is much kinder for you to tell students that proofreading is a highly specialized reading skill (which it is) and requires specific strategies and practice. If you decide that you are not going to expect "perfect" writing and that you are willing to overlook some errors while teaching proofreading strategies to help students learn to find their own errors, you will relieve yourself of the burden of *correcting* writing. Then, you can feel free to *respond* to writing.

Proofreading Strategies You Can Teach

Proofreading is a highly specialized reading skill; you can teach some strategies during class, but you cannot expect students to turn in perfect writing in the course of one term. You can, however, expect some progress. Tell students that proofreading means a) slowing down their reading, b) performing multiple readings and purposefully searching for specific errors, and c) isolating words and sentences so that their eyes learn to focus closely on the text they have written.

Because proofreading and editing should only occur during the final stages of the writing process, emphasize proofreading on final drafts; this may spoil pretty printed papers, but it will reinforce the idea that writing always needs to be revised and errors can always be found. You might decide to ask students to use these techniques in class just before they submit their final drafts to you. The 15 minutes of class that this will take will pay off for you when you do not have to correct these errors later. Proofreading in class also gives you a chance to observe student reading skills, and it gives students a chance to ask you questions about grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure. The instruction you can provide in class about their writing will be far more meaningful and complete than the comments you can write on their papers later.

Proofreading techniques, however, will not necessarily help students identify awkwardly constructed sentences or writing that is too colloquial. When you find that your students are "writing too much like they talk," ask them to learn to monitor their style of writing by working with a partner and checking their colloquialisms (which they will generally call "slang"). When they spot slang, tell them to ask themselves, *"What do I mean by this?"* so that they develop the habit

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of clarifying their ideas by using specific vocabulary instead of relying on slang to communicate an idea. For example, to say that a party was "cool" may communicate in speech that it was well attended with a lot of friends, good food, and dancing. But in writing, all that is missing.

Proofreading Techniques

Suggest the following strategies to help students develop proofreading skills.

1. *Read aloud with a better writer.*

Writers have to learn to monitor their writing by focusing more carefully on what they actually wrote versus what they intended to write. The more experienced writer can follow along and identify places where the original writer has not read what was on the page.

2. *Read aloud and listen for phrases and expressions that are usually used "on the street," with peers, or in casual conversation.*

Usually these phrases or expressions will not work in writing unless they are used as direct quotations to reveal aspects of the speaker's personality and style.

3. *Read the writing backward to identify typing or handwriting errors.*

4. *Read for specific errors, such as punctuation mistakes.*

Tell students to read their writing, stop at every comma, and check with a better writer to confirm correct usage.

5. *Read with a pencil and ruler, placing the ruler underneath the line of script or typing to isolate the print from other lines.*

Place the pencil on individual words, one at a time, and move it along to the next word only after checking the isolated word carefully.

International Students

Most colleges and universities welcome international students to their classrooms. You will likely have the experience of teaching students who are in the United States for their education and for whom English is not a first language. These students will write very differently from those who are American-born, and you will have to be flexible in the way in which you respond to their writing. When working with international students, continue to use the process approach to teaching writing, but recognize that international students need more overt and directive instruction to correct grammar, spelling, usage, and punctuation errors.

Although we can expect that native English speakers can identify and understand most of their errors because they have their spoken knowledge of English to draw upon, we cannot expect international students to identify their own errors without direct instruction. You, of course, may not have time to provide this instruction; consequently, you will have to request that a student receive special tutorial help, or you will have to learn to ignore the errors for the moment.

You can choose to concentrate on larger features—organization, coherence, focus, development—and look past the grammar and usage features that will be more persistent as errors. However, some students, depending upon their backgrounds, may have

trouble understanding the American discourse structure–that is, the general essay form that we require in college. The "five-star essay"—a two to five page paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion—is unique to American higher education. Other cultures—non-English speaking and English speaking—do not have the same expectations for written expression on these larger levels of organization and development.

Some students may need additional help in understanding the idea of paragraphs, thesis statements, and the general idea of essay coherence and organization. Again, decide how much individualized additional instruction you can provide, and then refer students to tutoring at your writing center where the staff can help international students with their writing.

Tips for Working with International Students

1. Be directive and precise in your explanations about grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage, and idioms.

2. Respond carefully to ESL students who seem to expect authoritative answers from you. They may come from traditional instructional settings that have prepared them to treat the instructor with respect and assign him or her complete authority.

3. Set concrete goals and realistic time-frames for individual conferences. ESL students are likely to want to work long hours with you to meet their own high standards for their writing. Urge students to plan multiple short sessions with you.

4. Suspend your preconceptions about how any ESL student may behave with you or toward you. Be open to learning about cultural differences from your students.

5. Do not judge or assess the reactions of ESL students to your comments during a conference. Students from non-Anglo cultures have different conventions for body language, facial expressions, and verbal feedback.

6. Suggest that ESL writers use their first language while composing initial drafts or outlines. Studies show that ESL writers may write more fluently in English if they first compose in their first language, then translate (Friedlander, 1990).

7. Give ESL writers opportunities to write about topics related to their first-language culture and experiences.

Students with Limited English Proficiency

You may have noticed a new group of students appearing in your classes over the last few years–students who were born in the United States and have lived here all their lives but still use a language other than English as their "first" language, having never acquired strong English speaking and writing skills as a consequence of schooling in the United States. This group of students is identified as having "limited English proficiency" (LEP). Such students may speak English with strong foreign accents and may be weak writers, with or without interference from their first language. It is not necessary for you to diagnose where their weaknesses as writers in English originated; instead of trying to diagnose the writing "problems" or insist on correcting all errors, focus on being sensitive to the student's

"Give ESL writers opportunities to write about topics related to their first-language culture and experiences."

background and cultural differences that may influence his or her receptivity to your teaching style, especially as it pertains to language instruction.

Remember that LEP students are actively straddling several cultures and actively identifying with their non-English speaking cultures. Such individuals are going to have a heightened sensitivity themselves to comments about their language styles because they know their weaknesses in English are a result of their backgrounds, which may be very important to them. However, changing their writing does not have to intrude on their identities. As long as you do not confuse speech behavior with writing behavior while discussing errors in writing, you can safely discuss strategies for improving their use of English.

Such students may have experienced prejudice in American schools because of their cultural identities and will be very sensitive to teachers' perceptions of their abilities. Commenting on their mistakes should never take the form of *"You don't know English," "You're functionally illiterate."* Instead, a comment such as *"There are some errors in your writing that distract your reader from getting your ideas,"* communicates the point that errors, no matter why they're there, need to be corrected for successful communication.

The following essay was written by a high-school student attending a special pre-college program for Hispanic students. In this essay, she describes the effect of prejudice—especially as it involves her ability to use English—on her educational experience. Her views clearly suggest to us that the most important instructional technique we can offer students like Cindia is to be sensitive to their cultural backgrounds, to encourage them to work hard, and to have high expectations for their success in school.

Cindia's essay points out forcefully how prejudices and stereotypes make their way into our views toward language. As long as she felt that her use of English was inadequate, her self-esteem was low

WE CAN DO IT!
By Cindia Sanchez

A lot of people hurt my feelings, but something that hurts me so deeply inside is when someone is prejudiced against us, the Hispanic population. They think that we cannot do anything. That puts me down, but at the same time, puts me up. It puts me down because I feel bad when I hear somebody talking bad about any Hispanic person. And that puts me up, to continue working hard to show everybody that we are not the kind of people that they think we are. We are like everybody in this world.

When I just came here, my family and I always had in mind that we were coming to have a better future, where everything was different— a place where we will have more opportunities, and where my family can improve themselves. And it is like that, but at the beginning all I faced was something that I did not expect or know. I faced a big barrier that did not let me go through like I wanted to. It was like a sin that I did not know English.

At the first days of school, once a teacher was talking to a group of Latino students, and I was in that group too. He told us that the Puerto Ricans were the worst. They were dumb, dirty... I felt so bad at that moment that I could not even defend my culture, because I could not speak English.

At that moment, I felt like telling the teacher that we are not like that. We have a wonderful culture, we have the same capacity and intelligence as every nationality in this world. And our race is like every other race that has good people and bad people. Also I wanted to tell him that if we want, we can be better than them. Our people are good people. They are happy, and a lot of them do not give up so easily.

At that time, people like that destroyed my self image, but later I realized that there was no reason to feel hurt because what the teacher was saying was not true at all. We, the Puerto Rican people, have a lot of things to be proud of. We have to let everybody in the whole world know all the good stuff, because a lot of them only see the bad things. We have a lot of role models, like Iris Clinton, a Coordinator of the Bilingual Education Program, Nancy Matos, a judge, both from Bethlehem, and Nitza I. Quinones, a judge in Philadelphia. They are only some of the role models that we still have, and that is what people need to see.

But that was yesterday. Now I am solid and sure about who I am and about my culture. I can defend myself and my people. I showed to all the people who thought that I could not do it, that I CAN do it! I improve myself as much as I can every day, and I will continue giving my all.

It hurts me a lot when someone else discriminates against any Hispanics. We have to fight against discrimination, and the best medicine for that is EDUCATION. That way you can prove wrong those who believe that Puerto Ricans cannot do it. WE CAN DO IT!

and so was her confidence in her ability to succeed in school. The stereotypes about Hispanics and Puerto Ricans in particular, were tied to her inability to speak English persuasively. Her arguments demonstrate how educators must recognize that prejudices can manifest themselves in the way we talk about language use--in speech or writing--and that we need to become aware of our own perceptions toward the language varieties and competencies that each student brings to the educational setting so that we can work to "overcome those perceptions that might compromise our abilities to offer all students and equally effective education" (Stone, 1992).

Tips for Working with LEP Writers

1. Help LEP writers connect with their first-language culture by assigning topics related to this background.

2. LEP writers may feel embarrassed to speak in class. Provide "safe" opportunities through small groups and individual conferences for LEP students to talk with you and with their peers.

3. Set high expectations for your LEP writers and help them meet their goals by performing well in class. Encourage revision so that they have a chance to practice new stylistic repertoires.

4. Discuss with your LEP writers their feelings of prejudice and stereotyping.

5. Focus on content instead of correctness during conferences and revision plans so that they believe you when you tell them you care about their experiences and ideas (K. A. Werner, Instructor, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, personal interview, October, 1992).

Conclusion

Students with greater differences between their spoken and written languages are most likely to be those who most need more opportunities to become successful. We need to let them have more chances to learn how to edit their writing, and we should not penalize them for what they haven't yet had a chance to learn. Encourage reading and revision; encourage working with others; encourage learning to trust one's own voice and, at the same time, translate that voice into written conventions.

Encourage writing to discover and rediscover; encourage learning proofreading skills as a kind of highly specialized reading skill. Be tough. Return work to be revised, but give specific feedback on how to revise, and be sure to tell students what was positive about the writing. Allow students to discover that hard work can be rewarding instead of frightening and frustrating. Encourage collaboration and peer-exchange: when students share their writing with their classmates they can see how their ideas and expression can bring pleasure and enlightenment to others.

As you consider how to integrate a multicultural consciousness into your writing pedagogy and as you struggle with the complexities and conflicts inherent in such a commitment, keep in mind the general significance of this process to meeting students' needs and creating the kinds of changes required by the new demographics of higher education. As stated by Mary Kalantzis and William Cope (1992) in their article, "Multiculturalism May Prove to be the Key Issue of Our Epoch,"

> *In higher education, such changes are necessary not just for the moral well-being of our students, but also for our collective economic well-being. In education faculties, in business schools, in the arts and social sciences, students must be prepared to face the challenge of multiculturalism as an intrinsic element of their future productive lives. Who, after all, will be their clients and co-workers?* (p. B5)

The tolerant and sensitive attitude toward language differences that you demonstrate models a way of behaving toward one another that students will remember from their college education. As an educator, you can feel rewarded and satisfied if this model becomes part of their way of looking at the world.

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Appendix

Additional Ideas for Writing Topics and Assignments

> *When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner's pick, a woodcarver's gouge, a surgeon's probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Is it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know tomorrow, or this time next year.* (Dillard, 1989, p. 3)
>
> *You may wonder how you start, how you catch the first one. What do you use for bait?* (Dillard, 1989, p. 12)

These ideas are for helping students to get started writing and to catch fire. These are quick in-class assignments—easy to present, monitor, and evaluate—that can easily be developed into longer projects if you so desire. Some of the topics are "experimental" in the sense that they will help students develop creativity and learn that taking risks with ideas and expression can open them to the rewards of writing. And finally, you and your students should have fun participating in these writing activities.

Writing Activities

Write with Your Students

Whether or not you believe it, you are the expert in your class, and when you assign writing tasks, students will benefit from your participation in the activity. When your students are writing, write with them, and when it's time to share or exchange writing, continue to participate in the way that is most effective for your class. For example, you may want to become a member of a small group and take a turn reading your writing aloud or passing your writing around for responses. Sometimes, however, you may decide that your presence in a small group would make the students uncomfortable or less natural with each other. Students will value their own writing more when they see that you value the assignment enough to try it too, and watching you take risks will make them feel more like taking risks too. Your own experience as a participant in the class's "writing community" will also help you notice what is working and what isn't with the assignment, and you will also feel the same kinds of apprehensions and rewards that the students do.

It is important also to model some of the activities that will be very new to the students, such as clustering. As you play with words and images, they will watch your creative process at work and see how ideas develop on the spot. Even though you may not feel like the resident expert all the time, your students believe that you are, and they will appreciate your effort to demonstrate what you are teaching. Remember that we learn many things by watching experts demonstrate, and writing can be effectively demonstrated—just like you learned to dance, play the clarinet, swing a baseball bat, or knead bread.

Brainstorming Activities: Listing and Clustering

During the first two weeks of class, students are overwhelmed by their new environment; this is a good time to use "listing" as an invention technique—it's easy, quick, and helps people focus their thoughts when they're feeling "brain-locked."

First, use listing to generate class discussion; later ask students to choose one topic and freewrite about it for five minutes, then share this writing in a small group. The topics below can also be used as general categories to help develop a longer essay. For example, when writing in response to the topic, "My Adjustment to College," a first-year student could write separate paragraphs about a) missing home, b) good things that have happened so far, c) my roommate, and d) things I'm worried about. The listing and freewriting will provide material for developing each paragraph.

*List four things from home that you miss.

*List four things about this week that have been great/awful.

*List four characteristics of your roommate.

*List four worries that you have about being in college.

Clustering is another invention technique that is fun to use in class; one of its strengths is its visual nature. When clustering ideas, writers can get a visual picture of development and organization.

Suggested Topics

1. Comparing Social Life in College and High School

This is actually a difficult topic because it requires writers to compare two sets of details. First, writers must generate the details, then examine and analyze them. Clustering will help writers see what information will work best in their essay.

*In the middle of your page, write the word "friends." Draw lines from the words, "high school friends," and at the end of each line, write a friend's name.

*Do the same for "college friends."

*Around the name of each friend, list words that you associate with that person—what do you do together? What social activities help constitute your relationship? Do this for both sets of friends.

This clustering activity generates details and associations that writers can use in describing their social activities in high school and college. Next, they will have to analyze the similarities and differences between details. Use *listings* and *categorizing* to help in this process.

*List social activities that you do with both sets of friends.

*List social activities that are unique to each set.

*Create categories for the similarities and differences.

*Analyze your categories. What are the features that create similarities, differences?

2. How Family Values Help Me Succeed in College

The same approach of clustering and listing can be used in generating material for this topic.

*List your family members.

*Choose one member and write his/her name in the center of the page.

*Extend lines from the person's name toward the page's edges, and at the end of these lines, write words that you associate with this person. What does this person like to do, eat, think about? What does he/she do with you that is especially enjoyable? Do this for one other family member.

*Examine the words you have written for each person: what features do these words have in common? Consider how what you do with a person, say to them, and think about them reflects your family's values.

*Freewrite for ten minutes about how one family member has helped you learn a set of values.

3. *Greek Life*

Help students explore their preconceptions and stereotypes about fraternities and sororities through some imaginative writing.

*Freewrite for five minutes: Describe the ideal fraternity or sorority member whom you would like to meet at a party.

*Freewrite for five minutes: Describe the worst stereotype of a fraternity or sorority member.

Follow these activities with some listing activities:

*List what you believe are benefits from joining a fraternity or sorority.

*List what you believe are drawbacks resulting from joining a sorority or fraternity.

Ask students to interview a "brother" or "sister" about actual benefits and drawbacks. They can then write up these interviews and share them with the class, comparing the images and realities of Greek life.

4. *Professors*

Students need help in learning how to interact with their instructors, how to present themselves during conversations, and how to ask questions in class. Focused freewriting activities will help them discover strategies to improve communication with their professors.

*List your present instructors.

*Pick one and list his/her characteristics.

*Freewrite for five minutes. How does this person expect you to behave during class discussion and during individual conferences?

*Write an imaginary conversation between yourself and this professor. Evaluate this conversation. What went wrong? What went well?

*Describe the ideal student who is able to communicate effectively with his/her professors.

*What do you need to learn to be a clearer communicator with your professors?

5. *Sexual Identity/Activity*

We all know that students need to talk and learn about sexual identity and activity, yet it may be very difficult for them to feel comfortable discussing these topics in large groups. Individual journal writing in a journal that is *not* read by others will help students find their thoughts and learn how to articulate their ideas for discussion. Assign journal topics for out-of-class writing; tell students they will not have to share their writing, but they will have to identify ideas they are comfortable discussing. The writing that results from these topics is not meant to be analytical, but to provide material for discussion that will lead to analysis.

*Explain why you do or do not believe students should have access to birth control through university health centers.

*Describe your attitude toward the opposite sex.

*Explain why you do or do not believe sexual activity is acceptable before or outside of marriage.

*Describe your ideal partner.

*Describe your worst date.

6. *Diversity Issues*

Again, students may feel more comfortable talking about stereotypes and prejudices after they have had a chance to write privately and focus their thoughts. Out-of-class journal entries that are not shared should help students prepare for discussion.

*List four groups of people who are different from you because of ethnicity, religion, race, or sexual orientation.

*Choose one group and freewrite for five minutes describing your stereotype of this group.

*Describe experiences you have had with representatives from this group of people.

*Review your writing: consider how your experiences reflect or are in conflict with your stereotypes.

7. *Topics for Returning Adults*

Adult students experience college differently than the average 18-year old freshman. They may have families, jobs, and many other responsibilities to balance with their academic lives. Writing topics should help such students express their apprehensions about being in college, about feeling "different" than most of the other students, about juggling their responsibilities, and about interacting with professors who may be their peers or may be younger than they.

*Describe your strengths as a student. What characteristics and skills from other work you have done will carry over to your college work?

*Describe your weaknesses. What skills do you feel you need the most help in developing?

*Describe the other students in your classes. What abilities to succeed do they seem to have that you feel you do not? How can you develop these abilities?

*List responsibilities at home or at work that you feel will interfere with your ability to be successful.

*List people you can call on to help you with household chores, child care, and any other duties that can take you away from your schoolwork.

*Describe your stereotype of the college professor.

*List your professors; choose one and describe him or her in detail. When do you feel comfortable talking with this person? When are you intimidated or insecure? Write an imaginary conversation between yourself and this professor that shows how you can communicate to your satisfaction. What do you need to do to be able to really communicate effectively with this professor?

Ten Tips for Creating Your Own Topics

When you are designing topics for student writing, use these techniques as you compose questions:

1. Begin with simple tasks: use listing, clustering, and freewriting in small increments. Ask students to *describe* before asking them to *explain*.

2. Help students learn to analyze details by asking them to create categories that lend themselves to analysis. Ask them to look for *similarities* and *differences*.

3. Use the journalistic heuristic to write questions. Use *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* to begin questions.

4. Avoid questions that lead to simple "yes" or "no" responses.

5. Create writing projects that build from listing and freewriting to essays.

6. Create connections between speaking and writing. Many topics about which you may be asking students to write include stereotyped images and assumptions about behavior and values. Ask students to explore their stereotypes by writing about them. Next, ask them to consider their actual experiences and compare the two. Finally, ask them to interview someone representative from the group about which they hold a stereotype, and explore how the individual reacts to the stereotype of their group. For example, on the topic of date rape, ask students to describe the typical rapist and separately, the typical rape victim. Compare their stereotyped descriptions to the statistics we now have on date-rape. Ask them to interview a person who has been trained to work as a volunteer at a rape-crisis center, and look for additional information about date-rape (they should know, of course, that such volunteers will not reveal specific information).

7. Be creative and bring in imaginary writing tasks. Such tasks are fun and can be non-threatening because they are not personal. For example, when using writing to help students discover strategies for situations they may not have yet experienced, use imaginary scenarios to generate discussion. For example, ask students to write the conversation between the two parties struggling against a potential date-rape situation. Discuss ways to talk and listen to avoid date-rape, and then ask students to rewrite the conversation so that date-rape does not occur. Similar activities can be developed around peer-pressure issues, such as drug and alcohol use.

8. Focus topics narrowly. For example, if you are discussing abortion—a very difficult topic about which to write clearly—ask students to do five-minute freewriting before a focused discussion. For example, ask students to list one context in which they think abortion is acceptable and then to list one context in which they think abortion is unacceptable. Finally, instruct students to choose one of these and write for five minutes, explaining their position.

9. Construct writing topics that address the positive first. For example, if you are discussing roommate relationships, ask students first to describe the things they like about their roommates; then ask them to describe the things that create conflict. Stressing the positive helps students recognize that their situation is not hopeless; with a more positive attitude, they will be more likely to find solutions.

10. Personalize topics. Students, when learning about issues that seem to exclude them personally, need to find personal connections. For example, in discussing prejudice and discrimination, ask students to write about a time they felt "out of place," ignored, or insulted. Ask them to describe what made them feel different from the rest of "the crowd," and how they felt as a result. Use this material as a starting point for talking about differences and prejudice. Another way in which to personalize a discussion of prejudice is to ask students to list words or phrases—"names"—they have been called or might be called, and then to choose one and write about its meaning and effect on their morale. Use this material to lead into a discussion about how language creates and reinforces prejudice.

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